

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

KAREN BOEHNKE PEESKER

EXPLORING LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS PERCEIVED TO
ENABLE SALESPERSON PERFORMANCE

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

Marketing and Sales

PhD

Academic Years: 2011 - 2016

Supervisor: Professor Lynette Ryals
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the degree of PhD

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study builds on previous sales leadership research by examining, comparing, and contrasting sales leaders' and sales representatives' perceptions of what leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with sales teams in a global enterprise software company. Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and statements coded into categories of leadership behaviours. Overall the sales professionals perceived the leadership behaviours of coaching, collaborating, championing, customer engaging, challenging, and creating vision enable salesperson performance. References were also made to candidate recruiting, inspiring and rewarding, however these were less frequent. Sales leaders and sales representatives agreed that coaching, collaborating, championing and customer engaging enable salesperson performance, however sales leaders spoke more about coaching, creating vision and candidate recruiting, while sales representatives spoke more about collaborating, championing, customer engaging and challenging. High performing sales representatives referred to coaching and customer engaging behaviours more frequently than average and low performing sales representatives, indicating the importance of these behaviours. Respondents also revealed that the intense pressure to deliver quarterly results made leadership challenging in this environment. This may account for the difference between sales leadership behaviours and leadership behaviours identified in the literature. This study suggests that a high pressure complex sales context might influence the type of leadership behaviours that may be best suited to enable salesperson performance.

This study contributes to the field by providing a framework of the sales leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance, providing confirmation that sales leaders adopt previously identified leadership behaviours in the sales context, and the identification of new leadership behaviours specific to the sales context. It also presents evidence that trust, confidence, optimism and resilience are potential mediators between sales leadership and salesperson performance, and it provides a set of implications for practice.

Keywords: sales performance, sales leadership, personal selling, leadership behaviours, sales

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The research problem

Sales leadership has been recognised as a crucial factor in global sales success (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2008; Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012; Ingram et al., 2002, 2005; Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). Sales professionals are dealing with unprecedented change in the sales environment, driven by advances in technology and globalisation. Key changes in the sales environment have been identified in the areas of customer requirements, enhanced competitive activity, and new technologies (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012; Jones et al., 2005; Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). With the explosion of the Internet and globalisation, customers now have a greater depth of knowledge, enabling a significant portion of the buying process to be completed prior to connecting with a salesperson (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012). Customers are more demanding and questioning of the messages they hear from salespeople than in the past (Freese, 2010). Sales professionals who have been described as key knowledge brokers (Verbeke et al., 2011) must provide value beyond the knowledge that customers can 'learn on their own'. Sales teams are required to meet higher response expectations, while dealing with shorter product life cycles, and requirements to customise solutions to meet specific customer needs (Ingram et al., 2005). In addition to these changes, virtual interactions with customers are starting to replace traditional meetings, and the sales team has increasing accountability to the business (Ingram et al., 2005). These trends, along with the role of managing customer relationships and solution selling, are placing "a different set of demands on today's sales force" (Evans et al., 2012, p. 89). The old methods of command and control sales leadership approaches are now in question (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012). Providing sales leadership in the complex, highly relational, business-to-business sales environment with the pressure of delivering quarterly revenue targets presents a live problem for sales professionals.

Previous studies regarding the role of leadership approaches and behaviours in deriving sales performance have produced inconsistent results (Arnold et al.,

2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Some of these studies have tended to challenge one another and it is not clear what aspects of sales leadership behaviours are linked to salesperson performance. It was also identified that the research findings were not consistent with researchers' expectations and the studies have produced inconsistent results (Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). In addition, the systematic literature review highlighted that much of the previous sales research has been conducted in stable, low change environments focused on business to consumer and retail sales (e.g., Arnold et al., 2009; MacKenzie et al., 2001), indicating an opportunity to research in the longer term high change sales context. Thus, the specific sales environment of the IT Company is interesting and may provide new insights about the impact of longer term leadership behaviours.

In addition, it has been suggested that the leadership literature has been leader centric and not focused on the follower (Ladkin, 2010). Ladkin (2010) calls for research that considers the perspective of the follower (in this case, the sales representative) in addition to that of the leader.

Moreover, a dominance of quantitative research in the sales leadership field was found in the systematic literature review for this thesis. Quantitative research is extremely useful for hypothesis testing, but when investigating unexplored phenomena qualitative research can be helpful in providing a deeper understanding of the phenomena, exploring new constructs, and learning about people's experiences and perspectives (Ritchie et al., 2014). Therefore, a research gap and opportunity were identified to consider an exploratory qualitative integrative analysis of the perceptions of sales leadership behaviours and salesperson performance from the perspectives of both sales leaders and sales representatives in a new context.

1.2 Background to the research

Although the importance of sales leaders in generating positive sales performance has been recognised, our understanding of sales manager performance is in its infancy, and exploration of this phenomenon from the perspective of both the sales manager and the salesperson is required (Deeter-

Schmelz et al., 2008). A systematic literature review on the relationship between sales leadership styles and sales performance found evidence supporting the use of specific leadership behaviours to impact sales performance. However, the evidence was inconsistent regarding the types of leadership behaviours which should be used to enable sales performance (Bass, 1997; Dubinsky et al., 1995; Humphreys 2002; MacKenzie et al., 2001). There have been recent calls for empirical research to test if 1) transformational leadership behaviours lead to increased sales results (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010), 2) to investigate leadership using samples of salespeople in industries characterised by change (Dubinsky et al., 1995), and 3) to test samples of business to business salespeople who have a lower rate of turnover than those in business to consumer industries (MacKenzie et al., 2001), such as a complex sales environment in the software information technology industry. In addition, there have been calls to develop research specific to customer value-creating contexts and to control for industry settings (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012). This sales leadership literature underscores the importance of understanding leadership behaviours in a longer-term complex sales context characterised by change and the context of value-creating exchanges with customers.

As well, the literature has suggested that sales leaders and sales representatives do not always view their environment in the same way (DeCarlo et al., 1999; Dubinsky, 1998; Evans et al., 2012) and that further study is needed of sales leader and sales representative interactions (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). In the leadership field, it has been proposed that researchers should consider the relationship of the leaders and followers rather than focusing on the separate identities of the individuals in the relationship (Ladkin, 2010). To support this idea, the importance of congruence between perceptions of leadership behaviours and sales representative's desires for leadership behaviours was found to have an impact on job satisfaction and effort (DeCarlo et al., 1999), validating the examination of the sales representative's perspective. In addition, as sales representatives often act as leaders and followers in their boundary role between customers and the organisation, capturing both perceptions may lead to new insights. Given the calls for research to investigate leadership behaviours and

performance in a business to business sales context, and given the importance of understanding both the sales leaders' and representatives' perceptions, there is an opportunity to develop a greater understanding of sales leadership by exploring these factors.

1.3 Aim of the research

Success in global sales depends on a sales leader's ability to provide effective leadership. The purpose of this research is exploratory in nature and is focused on gaining an understanding of leadership behaviours in the sales context and understanding implications of these behaviours. The aim of this research is to strengthen our understanding of sales leadership by examining sales leaders' and sales representatives' perceptions of what leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance in the complex, highly relational global enterprise software sales context. The research focused on the perceptions of both sales leaders and sales representatives, examining their differing experiences, rather than seeking for reasons to explain their behaviour. The research also sought to identify mechanisms through which this influence occurs, and to understand if there are subtle differences of emphasis placed on these behaviours that vary between sales leaders and sales representatives.

The research question that was explored in this thesis is: "What sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance?"

1.4 Personal interest

In the researcher's corporate career in sales leadership, she was fortunate to work in 15 different countries and found that a common denominator of successful sales leaders was their ability to use effective leadership behaviours to impact sales performance. The industry observation fit with her past MBA academic experience, where she completed cross-cultural research on transformational leadership behaviours (Boehnke et al., 2003). As a global sales leader, she constantly found herself referring to the transformational leadership research to help generate performance beyond expectations with her own sales teams. Intuitively, she felt that the idea of applying this work to sales performance

would be an interesting subject to explore, and it seemed to be an area where limited research had been done. As she researched the idea, she found an article on “Personal Selling and Transformational and Transactional Leadership” in the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, written by a key author of the transformational leadership theory Bernard Bass (1997). In this article, Bass (1997) supported the idea of increasing research in leadership behaviours, to provide useful processes to improve salesperson performance.

The researcher’s goal is to develop an expertise in sales leadership, which will be used to expand her consulting business and provide opportunities to work as a professor, teaching business executives and students. Ultimately, the researcher wants to help businesses and sales organisations to sustain stronger revenue results, by teaching them to utilise sustainable leadership behaviours in sales.

1.5 Research design and methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 36 senior sales leaders and sales representatives from major sales divisions and subsidiaries from 4 regions and 12 countries of a global Information Technology company (IT Company). This organisation is a relevant context because it operates in the complex value-creating enterprise software industry, and further study is required in this type of environment (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). The salespeople in this study were asked to describe exceptional salesperson performance and to identify the key leadership behaviours that they saw as enabling (explaining or accounting) for extraordinary salesperson performance. The semi-structured interviews produced over 47 hours of recording, which was transcribed verbatim and uploaded to NVivo. Statements of the transcripts were coded into categories of leadership behaviours. Although the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985) provided a theoretical model to guide the approach to exploring leadership behaviours, the development of ideas and constructs flowed from the research data. A grounded approach was used and the Miles and Huberman (1994) coding system was adopted. Enabling leadership behaviours were explored and sales leaders, sales representatives,

and high, average, and low performing sales representatives were compared and contrasted.

1.6 Key findings and contributions

Content analysis led to the identification of a framework of sales leadership behaviours, perceived to enable salesperson performance. Respondents made reference most frequently to five main categories of sales leadership behaviours that are perceived to enable sales performance: 1) coaching, 2) collaborating, 3) customer engaging, 4) championing, 5) challenging. Some references were made to candidate recruiting and core leadership behaviours of visioning, inspiring and rewarding; however, these were less frequent. As well, 1) trust, 2) confidence, 3) resilience, and 4) optimism were identified as potential mediators of the relationship between sales leadership and sales performance. Utilising an approach to understand both sales leaders' and sales representatives' perspectives proved to be insightful. Respondents also revealed that the intense pressure on the sales team to deliver quarterly results, made leadership challenging in this complex global sales context.

The main contribution to theory is how the work identified an emergent sales leadership framework of sales leadership behaviours that are perceived to enable salesperson performance. As well, the comparison between sales leaders' and sales representatives' perceptions, and the comparison between high, average, and low sales performers, provided new insights about sales leadership.

1.7 Outline of thesis

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on sales performance and sales leadership, examining the varying research that has been conducted in this field. Sales performance is examined, looking at the challenges in defining sales performance and outlining the definitions and background research. This chapter presents a review of leadership literature, highlighting the evolution and why some key theories of leadership (e.g., transformational and authentic leadership) are important to consider for this research. The role of the sales leader, the

relationship of salesperson performance with sales leadership, and potential mediating influences are examined.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology, the chosen philosophical perspective of social constructionist and the method of semi-structured interviews. The fieldwork is discussed at length, including demographics of participants, and data collection methods for both the pilot and main research study. A grounded approach was adopted and the coding analysis employed using NVivo software is explained.

The combined findings from the pilot and main study are presented in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research and discussion of the research data from all respondents that relate to sales leadership behaviours and potential mediators. Data presentation is addressed in this chapter to identify alternative forms of data display to reveal the richness and subtlety of the dataset. In Chapter 5, data is compared and contrasted between sales leaders and sales representatives. Data are also compared between high, average and low performers to generate additional insights. Finally, the sales leadership framework is presented and discussed.

Chapter 6 presents the discussion and contributions of the thesis. The framework illustrates the conceptual structure of sales leadership behaviours that are perceived to enable sales performance. The framework of sales leadership is explained in greater depth, and most referenced leadership behaviours are described that emerged from further analysis.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, with the aim of the research, implications for practice, limitations and directions for further research.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the thesis, explaining the aim of the research and the researcher's personal interest in the subject. Background information has been provided to position the research in sales leadership. An outline of the thesis explains the format and the content of each chapter.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction - Systematic literature review as an approach

The process of the systematic review provides an opportunity to examine conceptual and empirical evidence available on sales leadership, before beginning the process of empirical research (Denyer et al., 2008). “A thorough critical evaluation of existing research often leads to new insights by synthesising previously unconnected ideas, and can provide methods for the collection of data and suggests solutions tried in similar situations” (Hart, 2001, p. 2). To identify a new contribution to knowledge a thorough literature review helps to uncover gaps in the research, and to determine the right approach and methodology to employ (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

The systematic literature review process was adopted for the literature review, as this approach has been shown to increase methodological rigour by providing a systematic, transparent, and reproducible manner of data collection (Denyer et al., 2008). A systematic literature review adopts a scientific and replicable process to searching the literature. Unlike a traditional literature review, this procedure minimises bias and produces a transparent audit trail (Cook et al., 1997). Originally developed for scientific studies, the value of a systematic literature review is that it collects knowledge and evidence from a range of studies using a formal, structured process (Denyer et al., 2008). The approach can be “argued to be at the heart of a 'pragmatic' management research, which aims to serve both academic and practitioner communities” (Denyer et al., 2008, p. 220). Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) identified that in a systematic literature review, researchers may use citations for which they have only read the abstract and not the full text of the paper, which can lead to improper inclusion/rejection of papers. With this in mind, full readings of the text of all the papers was conducted, when possible, during the systematic literature review of the present thesis.

The aim of this systematic literature review was to perform a critical evaluation of the literature, to gather new insights on how sales performance can be optimised through leadership behaviours and styles. The goal of the systematic literature

review was to understand the mechanisms by which leadership behaviours impact sales performance. Specifically, the review used the CIMO framework (context, intervention, mechanism, and outcome) to: identify under what context (C) do leadership behaviours and styles influence (Intervention) the performance of the salesperson (Outcome) and to describe the generative mechanisms (M) that link leadership styles and sales performance. In doing this, it was noted that leadership behaviours and styles are not just interventions. They may also be seen as contextual/situational, particularly when the individual exhibiting them is not consciously choosing to do so.

In conducting the systematic literature review, empirical evidence that exists on the effects of leadership styles utilised by sales leaders on salesperson performance was examined. This was done by examining the domains of sales performance and leadership styles and behaviours. The first domain includes a study of sales performance. The literature on this domain was analysed to explain how sales performance is measured, and why it is important to study in association with sales leadership. The second domain focused on the theoretical perspectives of leadership styles.

A total number of 341 studies (115 papers in ABI, and 226 papers in EPSCO) were considered for review, based on the search string identified below.

Leaders n/3 (style* OR behavio* OR type*) OR “transactional leadership” OR “transformational leadership”AND Sales OR salesperson OR salespeople OR selling AND Performance OR efficien” OR effective**

After applying the filtering criteria specified in the systematic literature review protocol (Table 2-1), in the end 56 papers were included for review. Relevant streams of literature, focusing on the demonstration of leadership styles and behaviours in the sales context was reviewed, resulting in 100 relevant papers.

The 100 articles selected were then assessed using the quality criteria. Of the 100 papers identified, 26 papers were not relevant. 74 papers were screened for quality, and in the final selection, 56 papers were accepted. Table 2-1 provides a

transparent description of the selection process, and Figure 2-1 for the search flowchart.

Table 2-1 Systematic review selection process

Title screening & Abstract screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started with 341 articles and then followed the following process • Eliminated duplicates • Eliminated papers that did not address the research context • Eliminated papers that pertained to the research context but did not refer to the review question • Eliminated papers that were not in English • Retained 100 records (63 from ABI, 37 from EPSCO).
Full text screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For 100 articles a full text screen was conducted • 2 articles were eliminated because they related to the field of call centres, 4 because they related to different fields of business, 7 were eliminated because they addressed a different research area, 1 was eliminated because it related to market orientation rather than sales performance, 9 were eliminated because they related to the research area but did not refer to the review question, e.g. they did not relate to any of the questions as defined in the inclusion criteria and 1 article was eliminated due to duplication, 2 articles were eliminated due to year of publication, retaining 74 articles.
Quality screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For 74 articles a quality screening was conducted. • 6 articles were eliminated due to issues with evidence base, and they were not adequately linked to the literature • 2 articles were eliminated due to year of publication • 2 articles were eliminated due to journal and links to sales performance were not present. • 2 articles were eliminated due to focus on internal marketing rather than sales context • 7 articles were eliminated due to trustworthiness, e.g. the papers were not based on credible evidence. • 1 article (new conference paper) was added based on recommendation from the panel • The final selection was 56 articles

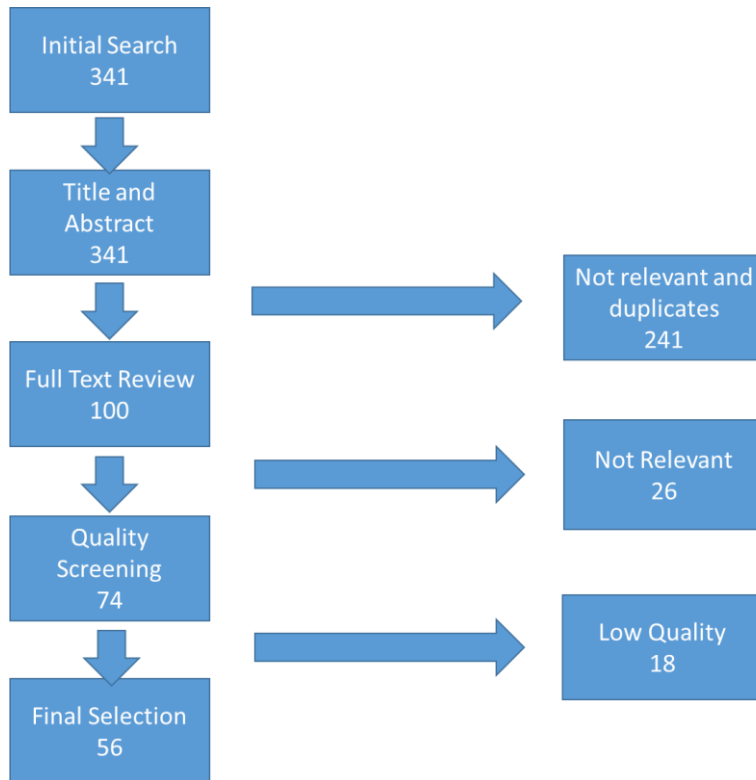


Figure 2-1 Step wise diagram, systematic literature review

The next step of the systematic literature review was the data extraction process which followed the data extraction format below (Table 2-2).

Table 2-2 Data extraction form

Aspects	Fields
Citation information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author • Title • Year • Type (Empirical or Conceptual) • Journal / Source • Year • Key words
Key Research Question /Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief description of the aim and objectives of the study
Evidential Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Findings – Nature of Leadership Behaviours • Key Findings – Nature of Sales Performance • Limitations and scope for future research
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods of data collection and analysis • Sample selection, size and characteristics

Aspects	Fields
Study context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country • Sector or industry • Context (type of sales environment e.g. business to business)
CIMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context (type of sales environment, e.g. business to business) • Interventions – Leadership behaviours • Mechanisms in the influence of leadership styles on sales performance • Outcomes – sales performance measures
Quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting quotes from the article

Characteristics of the Literature

The characteristics of the literature are an important aspect of the systematic literature review. A descriptive analysis of the 56 papers included in the review was conducted. This produced tables, which depicted several characteristics of the 56 papers in the review, including: journal characteristics, dates of the papers, types of industry represented, types of sales environments, country representation, and breakdown of key authors.

The descriptive analysis revealed important aspects of the extant literature about sales leadership to date. The articles identified for this review came from 32 scholarly journals. 57% of the articles came from 4 and 3 star journals, as per the Cranfield School of Management journal ranking system; 9 articles from 4 star journals, 23 articles from 3 star journals. Many of the articles (25%) came from the Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, which was the prominent journal in this review. Other key journals that cross over a range of research areas included: Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Marketing Science Review, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Business Research and Journal of Marketing.

Examining the publication history of the articles selected in the systematic literature review (Figure 2-2) demonstrated that 34% were published in the 1990's, and the majority, 66 % were published after 2000. Interestingly, in the last 5 years, 20 of the articles were published, suggesting that this is a current and relevant field of interest. This trend has continued, as since the time of the

systematic literature review there have been at least 7 relevant articles published in the field.

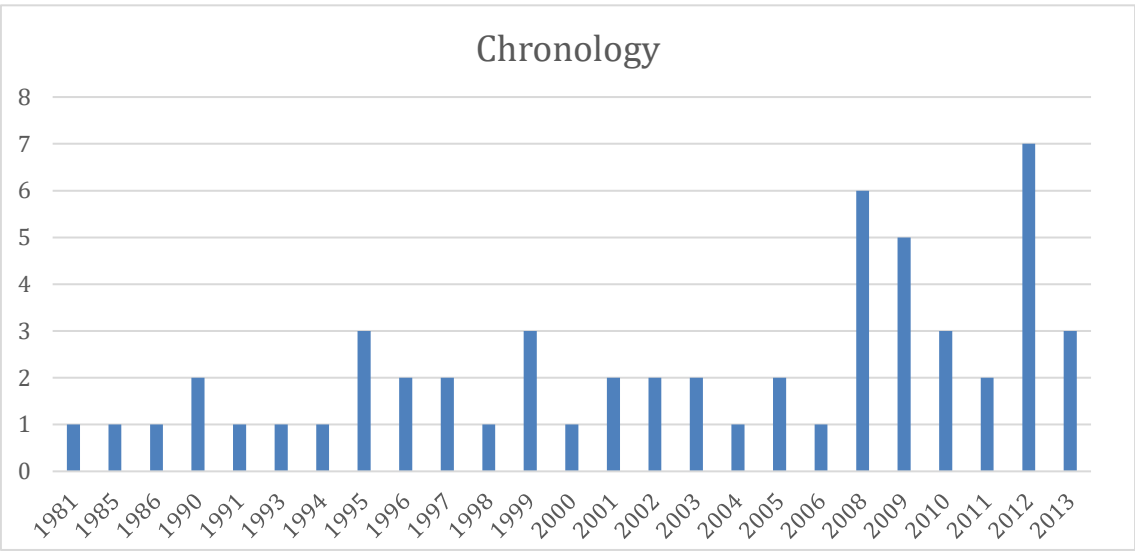


Figure 2-2 Chronology

There was a clear bias towards empirical research in the articles selected for this review, with 45 empirical papers and 11 conceptual papers. The method of research was 91% quantitative (Figure 2-3), and 85% of the papers were published in North America. There were 12 industries represented in the review. Most of the research was conducted in the Insurance and Pharmaceutical industries.

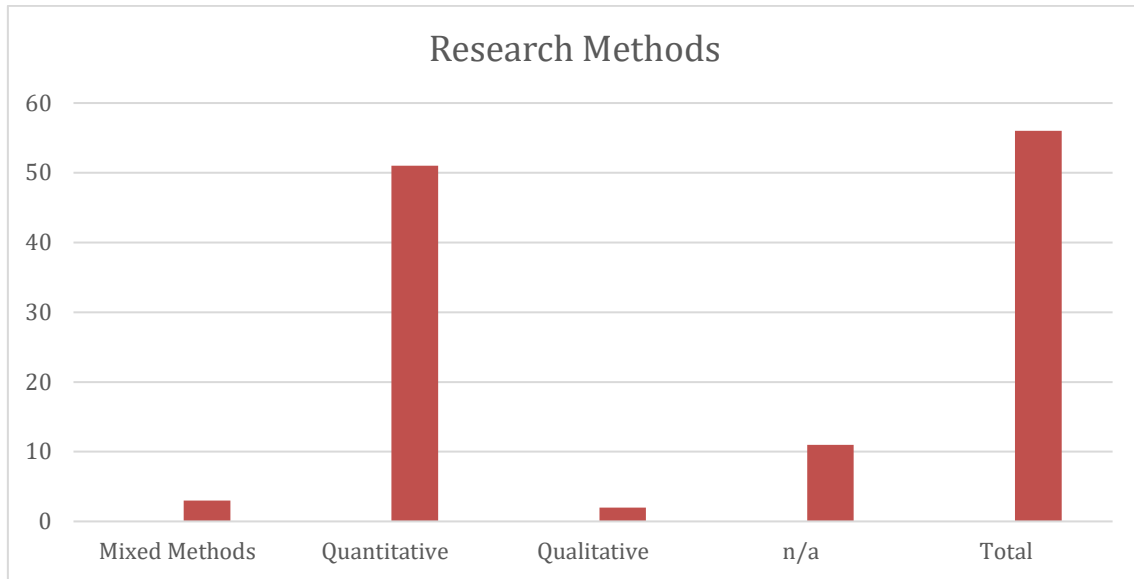


Figure 2-3 Research methods of articles identified in the systematic literature review

This review used existing literature and research on sales leadership to help propose a research design to improve current understanding on how leadership behaviours may lead to higher (or otherwise) sales performance. To do so, relevant themes related to both leader and follower were reviewed. Overall, the goal of the systematic review was to understand the mechanisms by which leadership behaviours impact sales performance. The context of interest for the research is in the business to business, complex, highly relational software sales environment, however in this review the scope was widened to include literature on all sales environments.

2.2 Leadership styles & behaviours

Leadership, in the general domain, is a widely-studied topic and a key construct in hundreds of academic studies (Ingram et al., 2005). In the past 30 years, academic literature on leadership has been extensive and continues to grow (e.g., Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Boehnke et al., 2003; Hersey and Blanchard, 1969, 1977; Howell and Avolio, 1993; Kouzes and Posner, 1995; Ladkin, 2010; Sashkin, 2004; Yukl, 1998; Yukl and Van Fleet, 1992). A review of the broader scholarly research on leadership demonstrates there are a “wide variety of different theoretical approaches to explain the

complexities of the leadership process” (Northouse, 2010, p. 1). Leadership has such a complex nature that it was described as there being “almost as many theories of leadership as there are psychologists working in the field” (Fiedler, 1971, p. 1). There are many publications on leadership theory and practice (e.g., Bryman et al., 2011; Day and Antonakis, 2012; Northouse, 2010) which review and summarise key theories of leadership, and provide a summary and critique of broad based leadership research, focused on improving the understanding of leadership.

The broader study of leadership has created various schools of thought. The trait school of leadership began with the “great man” perspective in the twentieth century, which suggested that attributes or traits created leaders (e.g., Bernard, 1926; Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948). This school of thought implied that leaders appeared to inherit or exhibit certain traits, such as physical characteristics, personality and skills that made them more able to assume leadership roles (Bass, 1990). While this area of research was less popular, due to inconclusive evidence of significant traits or characteristics that guaranteed leaders (Yukl, 1998), researchers have recently re-visited this to better understand differences in areas, such as gender and diversity, using new psychometric testing (Day and Antonakis, 2012).

In the fifties, the behavioural school of leadership focused on the behaviour and skills of leaders (Yukl, 1998). In this area researchers identified two leadership factors referred to as consideration (e.g., supportive, individual oriented leadership) and initiating structure (e.g., directive, task-oriented leadership) (Stogdill and Coons, 1957). During this research period, consistent evidence of a universally preferred leadership styled across tasks or situations was not identified (Day and Antonakis, 2012). Due to inconsistent findings from the behavioural school of thought, it was proposed that the success of a leadership style and behaviour must be contingent on the situation, leading to the leadership contingency theory movement (e.g., Fiedler, 1967, 1971; House, 1971). The contingency school of thought suggests that different situations require different leadership approaches, and the leader’s behaviour is ‘contingent’ on the situation

(Fiedler, 1974). Some contingency theories of leadership include path goal theory (House, 1971), Fiedler's contingency theory (Fiedler, 1974), and situational leadership theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977).

Based on the contingency work, the relational school of leadership developed in the sixties and seventies as researchers began focusing on the relationship between leaders and followers. This relational research eventually evolved into the leader member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). This form of leadership research focused on how high quality relationships between a leader and his or her followers (the 'in-group'), based on trust and mutual respect, resulted in more positive leader outcomes; whereas low-quality relationships (the out-group), based on fulfilment of contractual obligations resulted in less positive leader outcomes (Gerstner and Day, 1997). This line of research continues to develop new directions, and current research interest in relational theories remains relatively strong (Day and Antonakis, 2012; Gardner et al., 2010).

A focus on the charismatic/transformational school of thought began in the seventies and eighties, emerging from the research of Bass (1985) and Bennis and Nanus (1985). Bass (1985) built on the work of Burns (1978) to create the transformational leadership model. With this approach, the range of leadership characteristics and behaviours examined in the leadership field expanded beyond transactional (rewarding and correcting) theories (Howell and Avolio, 1993). Transformational leadership is described as a process by which a leader fosters performance beyond expectation, by incorporating inspiration, enthusiasm, intellectual stimulation, and individual support to encourage team members to see the importance of the higher goal, and to encourage each person to reach their full potential (Bass, 1985). Prior to this research development, Bass noted that "most experimental research, unfortunately, has focused on transactional leadership, whereas the real movers and shakers of the world are transformational" (Bass, 1990, p. 23). Transformational leadership, and other models under the heading of "Neo-charismatic" approaches, represented the dominant leadership paradigm over the past decade (Day and Antonakis, 2012).

The transformational leadership school of thought will be more fully described in Section 2.2.5.

Other schools of leadership include distributed leadership, servant leadership, collaborative leadership, shared leadership, authentic leadership, felt leadership, and the list continues (Ladkin, 2010). Two of these leadership theories, servant leadership and authentic leadership, were identified in the sales leadership literature and will be discussed in relation to the sales leadership literature. Emerging issues related to leadership include context, ethics, diversity, and followership (Day and Antonakis, 2012; Ladkin, 2010). The issue of context is relevant, and researchers have proposed that leadership and context appear to be intertwined (Day and Antonakis, 2012; House and Aditya, 1997). Ethics is also a key topic in leadership research, and issues regarding diversity and leadership, and culture have created interest (Boehnke et al., 2003; House et al., 2004; Lane et al. 2000). Furthermore, there have been discussions about the need for more integrative perspectives in leadership (Avolio, 2007; Haslam et al., 2011; Ladkin, 2010,) and the importance of followers and followership has been highlighted (Brown, 2012; Ladkin, 2010). In summary, the field of leadership continues to evolve and grow as scholars and consultants develop their ideas. It has been suggested that it is through the consolidation of past findings in the leadership field that the next level of leadership research may occur (Day and Antonakis, 2012).

For this thesis, articles identified in a systematic literature review on sales leadership were used to provide insights for the research design and discussion of this thesis. Furthermore, emerging leadership issues of context, an integrative perspective, and followership have been considered in the development of this research. The next section will describe the evolution of the sales leadership field based on the systematic literature review.

2.2.1 Evolution of the sales leadership field

Based on the systematic review of the literature, it is clear there have been key developments and stages in the field of interest relating to leadership behaviours/styles and sales performance. The findings are structured according

to the data extracted from the selected articles, as per the data extraction form included in Table 2-2. Evidence on the evolution of the field will be presented.

Situational leadership theory first emerged in the general leadership literature in the sixties and seventies (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969), although the focus on situational leadership was not picked up in the sales leadership literature until the eighties and early nineties. In general, the sales leadership literature seemed to rest on the philosophy that salespersons act individually, rather than collaboratively, and leadership needed to recognise this and act accordingly (Castleberry and Tanner, 1986). Examples of this approach were highlighted in the literature (Butler and Resse, 1991; Fiedler, 1981). There seemed to be a trend in the articles to examine the nature of sales supervisory closeness and the perceived level of that closeness (Dubinsky et al., 1994).

Moving into the mid-nineties the sales leadership field started to move towards an examination of transformational leadership and transactional leadership (to be defined in Section 2.2.4), with some empirical results suggesting that transactional leadership may be the preferred leadership style in sales (Dubinsky et al., 1995). A review of the literature revealed 17 studies regarding these specific leadership styles with mixed results. Three of these studies found some empirical support for using sales leadership practices designed around transactional leadership in specific sales environments based on the research findings (Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; 1996). Empirical evidence suggested that “transactional leadership is better suited for a selling context than transformational leadership” (Dubinsky et al., 1995, p. 27). This was surprising to the researchers who found that ‘unexpectedly’, transformational leadership was not related to all the work outcomes defined (Dubinsky et al., 1995). The researchers had not expected this type of result based on other empirical studies in different business divisions. Thus, there continues to be calls for further investigation, to understand if transformational leadership can make a positive impact in the sales context.

As the researchers moved forward in this field into the 2000’s, generative mechanisms were uncovered that enabled leadership behaviours to impact sales

performance. Mediators identified in the literature, included trust (Bass, 1997; Clapp-Smith et al., 2009; Mackenzie et al., 2001; Schwepker, Jr. and Good., 2010) role ambiguity (Mackenzie et al., 2001; Dubinsky et al., 2005), customer orientation (Bass 1997; Jaramillo et al., 2009; Martin, 2013), self-efficacy (Ahearne et al., 2005), organisational commitment (Chi, 2008; Dimaculangan and Aguilin, 2012), employee creativity (Evans et al., 2012), adaptability (Boyatzis et al., 2012), and salesperson coachability (Shannahan et al., 2013). There was a focus on coaching leader behaviours and trust building to encourage salespeople to be more successful with their customers (Rich, 1997; Shannahan et al., 2013). We started to see a trend towards encouraging a leadership style that would positively influence salespeople to be more customer oriented. With new demands on the sales force, the short-term oriented transactional leadership was in question. The researchers were interested in seeing if more positive leadership styles associated with a longer-term focus could help drive sales performance.

During this more recent phase, research in this area increased substantially, demonstrating greater interest and the relevance of the topic. New leadership ideas and styles that have now been explored, include Authentic leadership (Clapp-Smith et al., 2012), Servant leadership (Gisaffe et al., 2016; Jaramillo et al., 2009), and Emotional Intelligence leadership influences (Boyatzis et al., 2012). Predominantly in the sales sector, the focus has been on transformational and transactional leadership. As well, there has been an increased focus on ethical behaviour, and attempts to understand how leadership styles might impact the sales forces' ethical behaviour (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). Furthermore, the field is investigating workplace isolation, due to increased telecommuting, driven by technology and sales leadership and performance (Mulki and Jaramillo, 2011).

Table 2-3 outlines the research papers identified in the systematic literature review and categorises them into the aspects of leadership and associated behaviours that they discussed. Some leadership aspects, such as emotional and social intelligence, are attributes/skills that partly determine behaviour associated

with leadership. Some of these leadership aspects are identified as leadership styles.

Table 2-3: Examples of research exploring aspects of leadership and associated behaviours

Aspects of Leadership	Definition	Associated Behaviours	SLR Papers
Authentic Leadership Theory	Authentic leadership is a style in which leaders are deeply aware of how they think and behave of the context. Leaders are perceived as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness • Internalised moral perspective • Balanced processing • Relational transparency 	Clapp-Smith et al. (2009)
Contingency Theories of Leadership	This approach suggests that leadership effectiveness is contingent on a fit between leadership style and the context and/or situation (Northouse, 2010). (eg., Fiedler's contingency theory "predicts that task-motivated leaders will be most successful in situations of very high or relatively low control, whereas relationship-motivated leaders will be most successful in situations of moderate control"(Fiedler,1967, p. 6).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task focused behaviours • Relationship focused behaviours • Position/power focused behaviours 	Fiedler (1967); Butler and Reese (1991); Childers et al. (1990); Decarol et al. (1999); Chiu and Chen (2012)
Emotional and Social Intelligence	Emotional Intelligence is "the ability to monitor one's own and others feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this informational to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey and Mayer, 1990, p. 189)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops high trust and confidence • Manages emotions • Conveys a sense of organisational identity 	Boyatzis et al. (2012)
Empowering	Empowerment is described as leader behaviours that foster a sense of self-determination on the part of followers and create conditions that heighten their motivation for task accomplishment (Conger and Kanungo, 1988)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging autonomy • Fostering participation in decision making • Expressing confidence in the performance of followers • Enhancing the meaningfulness of work 	Ahearne et al. (2005); Yu et al. (2012); Ahearne et al. (2010)
Leader Member Exchange Theory	The Leaders Member Exchange theory describes leadership as a process centered on the interactions between the leaders and followers, where the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers is the focal point of the leadership process (Northouse, 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the relationships between the leader and each follower • Nurture high quality exchanges with followers with communication • Recognition of in-groups and out-groups and strive to be fair and equal in approach with followers 	DeVecchio (2000); Castleberry and Tanner (1986)
Servant Leadership Theory	In this leadership style, serving the needs of the follower becomes a leader's priority and an end in itself, rather than a means to achieve organisational objectives (Ehrhart 2004). "It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead". (Greenleaf, 1998, p. 123)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving the needs of the follower • Enabling growth of the follower • Power distribution vs power consolidation 	Jaramillo et al. (2009)
Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theory	Transformational leadership is a leadership style that motivates followers to achieve performance beyond expectations. Transformational leaders motivate followers to go beyond their own self-interests and to adopt the organisation's vision as their own; Transactional leadership (a component of transformational leadership) informs people of their responsibilities, instructs them on how to perform job activities, and uses contingent rewards or punishment (Bass, 1985). Bass (1985) proposed a full range model of Leadership, in which Transformational leadership is augmented by Transactional leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idealised influence • Inspirational motivation • Intellectual stimulation • Individualised consideration • Contingent reward • Management by Exception • Laissez-faire avoidance 	Bass (1997); Bettencourt (2004); Dubinsky et al. (1995); Yu et al., (2012); Mackenzie et al. (2001); Arnold et al. (2009); Shannahan et al. (2013); Chi et al (2011); Grant (2012); Dimaculangan and Aguilin (2012); Schwepker, Jr. and Good (2010); Chi et al, (2008); Barling et al. (1996); Yammarino et al. (1997); Comer et al. (1995); Panagopoulos and Dimitriadis (2009)

The main leadership theories and styles identified in the sales leadership literature that will be reviewed at length in this section, include: authentic leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership theory, and transactional Leadership. Other leadership styles relevant to the sales leadership domain will be discussed briefly. These include contingency theory, leader member exchange theory and path goal leadership theory.

2.2.2 Authentic leadership

Authentic leadership is a leadership style in which leaders are greatly aware of their thoughts and their behaviour in the context in which they operate (Northouse, 2010). The theory was proposed by Luthans and Avolio (2003), and further developed by Gardner et al. (2005). It has been described as “a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, and internalised moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of the leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94).

The four components which form the foundation of authentic leadership include: 1) self-awareness, 2) internalised moral perspective, 3) balanced processing, and 4) relational transparency (Northouse, 2010). Along with these components there are 4 key factors that are influential in a person’s ability to become an authentic leader: 1) the positive psychological capabilities called psychological capital of confidence, hope, optimism and resilience, 2) moral reasoning, 3) critical life events (Northouse, 2010). The life story of the leader and the meaning the leader attaches to this experience is an important development to enabling authentic leadership. In addition, an important consideration of this leadership style is that the role of the follower is equally important to understanding the leadership process, as is the role of the leader (Gardner et al., 2005).

This leadership style has an integrated approach, which recognises that leadership can be shared, enabling leaders to act as followers, and followers to act as leaders. This is especially relevant in the sales environment, when sales

people are acting as leaders with their customers and other team members in the organisation; as well, for when salespeople are acting as followers. Authentic leadership style, along with positive psychological capital is a key factor that is influential in a person's ability to be an authentic leader (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). Psychological capital is described as "positive attributes which predispose or enhance a leader's capacity to develop the components of authentic leadership" (Northouse, 2010, p. 219). There are 4 positive psychological capacities that have an impact on authentic leadership: confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience (Northouse, 2010). Being an authentic leader relates to trust, which has been described as impacting organisational performance (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). In the Clapp-Smith et al. (2009) study of 89 employees at 26 small retail stores, the researchers found support that authentic leadership is related to both sales performance and trust. They also found support that group-level follower psychological capital has a relationship with trust, which mediates the relationship with sales performance (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). By measuring the sales results over a 4-month period, they found that not only did the states and behaviours of the leaders' impact sales performance, but also the salespersons' positivity. The authors found that trust was a key mediator, and they suggested that increased trust encouraged the followers to be more willing to invest increased time and resources, which in turn helps positively impact sales performance.

Clapp-Smith (2009) was the only study in the systematic literature review found on authentic leadership, and it has been suggested that empirical evidence concerning authentic leadership is limited, and more research is required (Caza and Jackson, 2010). There is an opportunity to expand on the Clapp-Smith et al. (2009) study, by taking a longitudinal approach and testing additional sales performance and outcome variables (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). This suggests that there may be an opportunity to provide academic contributions, by investigating aspects of authentic leadership, such as understanding the followers' perceptions, in the sales content and providing empirical evidence in relation to sales performance.

2.2.3 Servant leadership

The servant leadership style is an interesting leadership approach, focused on serving and putting followers' needs first. With this school of thought, serving the needs of the follower is the leader's priority rather than a primary focus of achieving organisational objectives. This leadership style proposes that a sales leader is responsible for the success of the organisation and the success of his or her subordinates (Greenleaf, 2002). Servant leaders place the needs of their subordinates before their own needs and focus their efforts on helping subordinates grow to reach their potential and achieve optimal success (Greenleaf, 1970). This leadership style develops high levels of trust in the relationship because of the leaders' actions being considered more moral and honest by their team (Liden et al., 2008).

Servant leadership has been discussed as a subset of transformational leadership (Bass and Riggio, 2006). The servant leadership style is like the transformational leader who brings about the moral uplifting of followers as discussed by Bass and Riggio (2006). However, this leadership style differs by its emphasis on the follower versus organisational outcomes (e.g., salesperson performance). Servant leadership has been described as focusing on serving followers first, while transformational leadership has been described as focusing on delivering performance outcomes first (Jaramillo et al., 2009). Thus, the element of follower focus by the leader, versus outcome focus, is not captured in the same way by transformational leadership.

There has been recent research conducted on the servant leadership style in the sales environment (Grisaffe et al., 2016; Jaramillo et al., 2009; 2015; Schwepker, Jr. and Schultz, 2015). The findings of one study suggested that servant leadership values held by sales managers, have a significant effect on salesperson values regarding customer interactions, ultimately affecting salesperson performance (Jaramillo et al., 2009). Results of a recent study suggests that sales firms can "reap enhanced multi-faceted benefits through higher levels of servant leadership" (Grisaffe et al., 2016, p 40). Results from Jaramillo et al. (2015) suggest that servant leadership behaviours do impact

salesperson performance through a mediating process that involves salesperson perceptions of servant leadership and ethical work climate. Schwepker, Jr. and Schultz (2015) found that servant leadership has emerged as a critical leadership style and suggest that it affects outcome sales performance. While this style may be more difficult to implement in a quota focused high pressured sales environment, there seems to be current interest in this topic, and there may be scope for additional research on how servant leadership styles can enhance sales performance.

2.2.4 Transformational and Transactional leadership

For the past thirty years transformational leadership theory has been one of the most researched ideas within the field of leadership studies. There is a significant and growing body of evidence, demonstrating that transformational leadership is an effective form of leadership in a variety of settings in many countries (Bass and Riggio, 2006). From 2000 to 2013, a total of 585 articles researching transformational leadership were listed in the social science database. The continued interest in transformational leadership may be because there is evidence that this model works well during times of change (Bass and Riggio, 2006), and the current sales environment fits that model. It provides a more inspiring and personal focused form of leadership to motivate individuals, and yet still fits the sales business model by focusing on delivering results. Importantly, the leadership analysis tools and instruments, such as the MBI leadership model (Bass and Avolio, 1990), provides an effective and business focused approach to helping leaders understand their strengths and weaknesses and gain greater self-awareness. The approach provides leaders with the opportunity “to create a ‘development plan’ to improve performance on specific factors. There is a neatness about such an approach, which is highly attractive” (Ladkin, 2010, p. 4), and while there are significant limitations to this method (Ladkin 2010), this leadership style seems to fit well in the sales environment.

The concept of transformational and transactional leadership was first introduced by Burns (1978) with his classification of political leaders. Burns (1978) argued that transformational leaders inspire others to achieve performance beyond

expectations, while transactional leaders lead by exchange, such as offering rewards and recognition. Transformational leaders “have goals that transcend their own self-interest, and work towards the common good of their followers... and look for potential motives in followers, seek to satisfy higher needs, and engage the full person of the follower. The result is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (Burns, 1978, p.4). Burns focused on the concept and moral basis for transformational leadership, however, he did not explain what types of action or behaviours were used by transformational leaders (Sashkin, 2004). Bennis and Nanus (1985) built on this work to include behaviours and characteristics, and they also considered the organisational context. Kouzes and Posner (1987) identified key behaviours, however critics (Sashkin, 2004) felt they discussed too many behaviours. House (1977) put together a theory with two behaviours used by transformational leaders, specifically the communication behaviour and creating empowering opportunities for followers.

Building on Burns (1978), and House’s (1977) Theory of Charismatic Leadership, Bass (1985) took this work to a new level with the Theory of Transformational Leadership. Bass developed a transformational leadership model and created a tool to measure this leadership style (Bass and Avolio, 1990). Like Burns, Bass described transformational leadership as a style which involves a focus on creating positive development of followers. In contrast to Burns, Bass believed that transformational leadership was not a substitute for transactional leadership; rather, it is a complement (Bass, 1985). Thus, Bass (1985) created a Full Range Leadership theory and model, focused on identifying specific leadership behaviours.

Bass described transformational leadership as raising leadership to the next level (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership involves encouraging individuals to commit to a shared vision, inspiring individuals and challenging them to solve problems, as well as developing follower’s skills through coaching (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders behave in ways to achieve exceptional results by applying transformational leadership behaviours outlined in the model.

Transactional leadership is focused on an exchange between the leader and the follower. Leaders outline what is required of the team (for example in terms of the sales performance), and outline what compensation they will receive if they fulfil these requirements. This transactional leadership process provides a reward for good performance, and correcting actions for poor performance. Finally, the laissez-faire leadership is included, which is an avoiding behaviour and this has been shown to create performance below expectations (Bass and Riggio, 2006). This is relevant to this thesis, as perceptions of leadership behaviours by sales leaders' and sales representatives' will be explored to see if sales performance is perceived to be impacted when the leader behaviours are applied.

There is significant evidence that transformational leadership creates performance beyond expectation, transactional leadership creates performance at expectation, and laissez-faire leadership creates performance under expectation (Bass and Riggio 2006; Boehnke et al., 2004; Howell and Avolio, 1993). Transformational leadership is now part of what Avolio et al. (2009) have defined as "new genre leadership theory". This leadership style may be viewed as an expansion of transactional behaviour and is defined in terms of the leader's effects on followers (Felfe, 2004). In the sales environment, transactional leadership styles have been suggested as the preferred leadership style to enhance sales performance (Dubinsky et al., 1995), however research is also indicating some transformational leadership behaviours, such as coaching (individualised consideration, Bass, 1985) can enhance sales performance (Bettencourt, 2004; Humphreys, 2002; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Panagopoulos and Dimitriadis, 2008).

Sales leadership research has investigated transformational and transactional leadership styles relative to sales performance (Bass, 1997; Dubinsky et al. 1995; Humphreys 2002; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Researchers have conducted empirical studies that provide findings confirming that transactional leader behaviours are used by high performing sales leaders (Dubinsky et al., 1995; Howell and Avolio, 1993; MacKenzie et al., 2001). They have also argued that transformational leadership positively impacts performance (Dubinsky et al.,

1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001), however there was conflicting evidence about the impact of all transformational leadership behaviours in sales. In the sales environment, Bass' view that transformational leadership is not a substitute for transactional leadership, but rather its complement has been validated (Bass 1985; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Jolson et al. (1993) suggested that recruiting, training and developing sales recruits with desired transformational leadership skills and adding to a transactional leadership setting that already exists, would greatly impact on improving the sales performance. Therefore, based on this literature review, it seems there is an opportunity to better understand which leadership behaviours are best suited to the sales environment.

Limitations and Criticisms of Transformational Leadership

It is important to consider the critiques to understand the limitations of this leadership style in sales research. Critics have stated that they find that transformational leadership does not consider the organisation context (Sashkin, 2004). It has been argued that context is not identified in this theory to the same extent as other theories (Ladkin, 2010). This is relevant to sales leadership research, as the context of sales can vary dramatically depending on customer segmentation. For example, Arnold et al. (2009) found that the transformational leadership style was not appropriate for a retail sales context; however, it was appropriate for a services sales environment (Arnold et al., 2009). Thus, it is important to consider organisational context in examining this leadership style in the sales environment. It is possible that transformational leadership may be more appropriate in the complex, highly relational software sales environment of the present study, as a complex, high change environment has been identified as a context in which transformational leadership behaviours are well suited (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Exploring this research style in a specific context may provide new insights into the literature and address this critique.

Beyer (1999) suggested that in transformational leadership research, there was a tendency to recycle the same methodological approaches (Diaz-Saenz, 2010). This is important to sales research, as it was identified in the systematic literature review of this thesis that similar quantitative methodological approaches have

occurred in 91% of the literature. Quantitative research methods, using survey instruments, such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio, 1990) and Podsakoff et al. (1990) Transformational Leadership Behaviour Inventory (TLI), have been predominantly used when researching transformational leadership (e.g., MacKenzie et al., 2001). This is relevant to sales research as it suggests that new methodological approaches, such as qualitative analysis may provide additional insights into the field. Thus, there is an opportunity to explore sales leaders' and sales representatives' perceptions using a new methodology, and potentially expand the ideas in this field.

Another criticism of transformational leadership is that the focus has been on leaders, rather than considering leadership as a collective process, encompassing both leaders and followers (Ladkin, 2010). Ladkin (2010) proposed that transformational leadership represents a reductionist method, which does not attend to the leadership relationship and does not explore how leadership can be shared so leaders can act as followers, and followers can act as leaders (Ladkin, 2010).

In this research, it is important to consider leadership as a collective process, due to the nature of the sales representatives' role in the business. Sales representatives are in a boundary role (Walker et al., 1979) where they interact with individuals both internal and external to their organisation, and thus they are required to act as both leaders and followers on behalf of their customers. It may be interesting to understand followers' perceptions about leadership behaviours, as in this boundary spanning role, leadership is often shared (DeLVecchio, 1998). For example, when a sales representative is acting on behalf of their customer, the sales leader may follow the sales representatives, validating the importance of capturing their perspective. In addition, the collective process of leadership is important to consider, as the sales leaders and sales representatives often work together to deliver solutions to customers and to win business from competitors. The nature of these leader and follower interactions, indicates that understanding the collective process, including perceptions of both the sales leaders' and the sales representatives' is important to this research, to help develop a better

understanding of what sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance.

2.2.5 Other leadership theories and styles in sales

Alternative leadership styles, which were highlighted in the sales literature, included leader member exchange theory, contingency leadership theories (e.g., situational leadership) and path goal leadership theory.

The leader member exchange theory focuses on the relationship between the leaders and the followers, via a social exchange process. The sales leadership research has examined the relationship between sales managers and sales representatives, generating findings about the important role of trust in the relationship (Ingram et al., 2005). “Studies indicate a positive relationship between trust and job satisfaction, satisfaction with the manager, a positive psychological climate, a willingness to change, and a negative relationship between trust and role conflict (Lagace 1991; McNeilly and Lawson, 1999; Strutton et al., 1993). Other studies in this area have investigated ways for sales managers to build trust with salespeople. Being a role model, leading by example, being fair in performance evaluations, making calls with salespeople, and empowering salespeople, have all been found to be effective ways to build trust (DelVecchio, 1998; McNeilly and Lawson, 1999; Rich, 1997)” (Ingram et al., 2005, p. 139). This leadership school of thought has explored aspects of the sales leaders’ and sales representatives’ relationship and identified the importance of trust. This is relevant to the future research, as continuing to build on developing our understanding of the leader follower relationship, may enable greater insights in the literature, especially in relation to understanding leadership behaviours within the context of this relationship.

The Contingency leadership theory prescribes leadership behaviour, given different situations that a leader might face. Sales researchers who focused on this leadership school of thought have found mixed results. Butler and Reese (1991) found that the situational leadership model did not lead to superior performance in a sales management setting, and was associated with inferior

performance. Thus, this leadership style was not identified as a key style to analyse in the present research.

The Path Goal theory proposed that leaders engage in behaviours that facilitate goal attainment and motivate their team to reach goals. Path goal theory has helped define behaviours of effective sales leaders (Jaramillo and Mulki, 2008). There is some evidence that salespeople are responsive to this leader style when sales leaders help the salesperson to grow by performing activities (Jaramillo et al., 2009). The style has not been the focus of sales leadership and has provided limited insights into this connection, supporting the decision not to include this style in the present research.

There are a variety of leadership styles that have been examined in sales leadership. The systematic literature review outlined above provides a summary of key findings in sales leadership research. It has been identified that additional work on sales leadership is needed “in a changing environment, characterised by the dimension of complexity, collaboration, and accountability. In addition, new concepts and approaches are required to move the sales leadership research area forward” (Ingram et al., 2005, p. 140). The proposed research model of this thesis will move forward on this call to research.

2.3 Sales performance

The importance of sales performance to researchers and practitioners is demonstrated in several meta-analytical studies (Brown and Peterson, 1994; Churchill et al., 1985; Kohli, 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). Outcome sales performance has been defined as “behaviour that has been evaluated in terms of its contribution to the goals of the organisation” (Walker et al., 1979, p. 33). When exploring sales performance from a behaviour perspective, it is suggested that multiple performance dimensions are important to consider (Walker et al., 1979). Weitz (1981) put forward a link between selling behaviours and effectiveness. Brown and Peterson (1994) found “effort” to be a mediator, which had a significant positive impact on sales performance. Sales performance has been considered by researchers to be the result of a variety of concepts, some put into frameworks (e.g., Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). However, it has

been suggested that the ability to predict sales performance based on these ideas is not ideal (Evans et al., 2012).

Research suggests that sales performance is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon. Walker et al. (1979) suggest that “sales performance is the result of carrying out a number of discreet and specific activities which may vary greatly across different types of selling jobs and situations” (Walker et al., 1979, p. 22). The complexity of sales performance was also highlighted by Weitz (1981) who suggested that research on sales performance has not been conclusive, as it has been conducted across too wide a range of situations, often based on the corporate data available. In some of the research identified in this systematic literature review, sales performance measurements varied to include in-role sales performance (based on company outcome metrics) and extra-role sales performance measures (such as helping, civic virtue and sportsmanship). Some of the sales performance measures were situationally dependent, based on the organisational measurement availability (e.g., MacKenzie et al. (2001) used data on commissions, policies sold and percentage of quota from company records). Thus, while the measurement and criteria for sales performance is important to business and to academic research, sales performance remains a complex area.

There has been empirical research conducted to understand what variables enable sales performance (e.g. Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Brashear et al., 1997; Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). Cravens and Woodruff (1973) produced a framework of sales determinant variables including: 1) personal, organisational and environmental factors, 2) motivation, 3) aptitude, 4) skill level, and 5) role perceptions and sales behaviours and performance (Walker et al., 1977, 1979). Key research by Churchill et al. (1985) found that role variables and skills had the strongest relationship to salesperson performance. Sales performance has been considered a direct outcome of antecedent variables of skill level, aptitude, motivation, and role perceptions, which are affected by personal, organisational and environmental variables impacting the sale team (Brashear et al., 1997).

More recent research by Verbeke et al. (2011) provided a meta-analysis of 268 sales performance determinant studies conducted between 1982 and 2008. The study found similar results to Churchill et al. (1985) but adapted the ranking order to highlight five drivers of sales performance as 1) selling related knowledge, 2) degree of adaptive-ness, 3) role ambiguity, 4) cognitive aptitude, 5) work engagement. One of the main findings of this work is the concept that was proposed that salespeople are becoming knowledge brokers to “transfer knowledge about products to customers” (Verbeke et al., 2011, p. 422).

Measuring sales performance can be approached by using output and input based measures (Verbeke et al., 2011). Output measures are typically based on objective sales metrics, including sales results measures such as revenue, margin, percentage of quota, funnel attainment, number of new customer wins, product line or service attainment. Input (also referred to as process) based measurements are more subjective and focused on measures of behaviours versus outcomes. Increasingly corporations and researchers are using behaviour based measures in addition to input measures. These are useful as they measure activities the salespeople do and therefore can control. Examples of these may include account strategy behaviours, number of sales calls per week, administrative tasks etc. The challenge is that this approach is difficult to measure accurately. Verbeke et al. (2011) suggested that in the current sales environment multiple types of sales performance constructs exist in both outcome and input variables, and it is suggested that researchers consider multidimensional sale performance constructs of both subjective and objective performance indicators to capture overall sales performance.

2.4 Leadership and sales performance

In this section, previous findings suggesting a link between sales leadership and sales performance will be explored. The systematic literature review enabled the identification of key leadership behaviours that led to higher levels of sales performance in the sales context. Although much of the leadership literature is itself organised within ‘schools’ of thought, later in this section leadership

behaviours associated with sales leadership will be identified, some of which may overlap with the leadership schools identified previously in the literature.

Discrepant results

Throughout the literature review there were inconsistencies about leadership and sales performance. Some studies found that transformational leadership behaviours by managers led to sales performance (Howell and Avolio, 2003; Mackenzie et al., 2001), and some study results suggested that transactional leadership behaviours by managers improved performance (Dubinsky et al., 1995; Dubinsky et al., 1996). To understand why discrepant results such as these exist, study variables were reviewed, including sample size and industry studied. Based on this review, it seemed that some of these differences can be explained by the sales environments in which the studies were conducted.

This systematic literature review confirmed that effective leadership to drive sales performance may be context dependent. In certain contexts, such as a fast-moving consumer product sales environment or stable business environment, a transactional leadership style seems most appropriate based on the literature (Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995). In other contexts, such as business to business sales environment a transformational leadership style, augmented by transactional style, was found to influence sales performance (MacKenzie et al., 2001). Authentic leadership was found to develop trust and therefore impact performance in a financial services company, providing an example of the context in which this type of participatory leadership style can be effective (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). These findings equip leaders with the knowledge that they need to adjust their style to the appropriate environment. This is particularly important to companies who are changing product lines or adding services to their business. For example, if a product based company was to move to selling services, then the sales leadership may consider adapting to transformational leadership behaviours to enable sales performance. Although companies may provide detailed technical training to transition a business to this mode, this research indicates that they ought to invest in their sales management team and ensure

their leaders are equipped with leadership behaviours which could make an impact on sales performance and enable a successful transition for the team.

In examining how the literature conceptualises leadership styles and sales performance, it appears that while there is an understanding of some key elements, there are calls for additional research in this area (e.g., Ingram et al., 2005). The work in the literature has been developed in 45 empirical studies identified in the 56 articles of this review. In the current environment, the conceptualisation of these domains of research and the mediating efforts remains inconclusive indicating a research gap.

Current leadership theory suggests the future direction of leadership research should move away from a leader-centric approach to a more integrative approach, in which followers, context, and group levels of analysis are tested to advance leadership theory (Avolio, 2007). This was further emphasised in *The New Psychology of Leadership* (Haslam et al., 2011), which proposed that leadership research is moving forward to consider the following key elements: “1). Whether or not leadership is successful depends on context, 2). Leadership is not a quality of leaders alone but rather of the relationship between leaders and followers, 3). Leadership is not just about existing social realities, but also about the transformation of social reality” (Haslam et al., 2011, p. 45). As these theories move forward in the sales context, there is a call for research to quantify how leadership behaviours can impact organisational outcomes, such as sales performance (Avolio, 2007; Clapp-Smith, 2009). Furthermore, it has been identified by scholars that “within the sales leadership domain, the focus should be on identifying the critical leadership capabilities required for different sales organisation positions.” (Ingram et al., 2005, p. 13). This provides an interesting opportunity to develop insights into the field of sales leadership and fits with the research objective of this thesis.

Linking sales leadership and salesperson performance

Sales leaders have a significant influence on salespeople, the sales process, and sales performance. It has been found that high-performing sales managers create a culture where sales teams work harder and smarter (Jaramillo et al.,

2009), which can result in greater sales performance. Research by Castleberry and Tanner (1986), Dubinsky (1999), Evans et al. (2012) has shown that sales managers impact the sales process by helping to develop customer relationships, providing evidence that sales leadership can impact sales performance indirectly. Weitz (1981) incorporates many elements, such as salesperson resources, which are influenced or controlled by the sales leader into the performance model. Other variables have been identified as providing indirect influences on sales performance, including self-efficacy (Mulki et al., 2006), organisational citizenship (MacKenzie et al., 2001), job satisfaction (Shoemaker, 1999), motivation (Weitz et al., 1986), higher levels of extra effort (Jaramillo and Mulki, 2008), and stronger ethical behaviour (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). It has also been demonstrated that interactions between the sales representative and sales manager have an impact on performance (Good, 1993).

Evidence in support of transformational leadership styles and behaviours

The practice of transformational leadership behaviours has been found to lead to positive sales performance outcomes. Empirical evidence across several studies (MacKenzie et al., 2001; Howell and Avolio, 1993) support the positive effects of transformational leadership on performance outcomes, and even more so for the indirect selling efforts (Ingram et al., 2005). Howell and Avolio (1993) demonstrated that transformational leadership positively predicted unit-level performance across a variety of divisions in a large Canadian bank. MacKenzie et al. (2001) also found evidence that leader behaviours impact salesperson performance. They studied 477 life insurance sales agents, and revealed that transformational leadership influences salespeople to perform beyond expectations, and that these behaviours have a stronger direct and indirect relationship with sales performance and organisational citizenship behaviour than transactional leader behaviours (MacKenzie et al., 2001). This research confirmed the view of Bass (1985) that transformational leadership augments transactional leadership, and it found that both leader styles have beneficial effects on salespersons attitudes and role perceptions. The research also confirmed that the avoiding and correcting behaviours have negative effects on

performance (MacKenzie et al., 2001). This study showed that transformational leader behaviours increase the impact of transactional leader behaviours on salesperson's in-role and extra-role performances and organisational citizenship behaviours (MacKenzie et al., 2001). A limitation of the research was the participants in the sample. The researchers studied a sample of sales representatives in the insurance industry, which is described as having high rates of turnover, as in industries such as retail (MacKenzie et al., 2001). It was suggested that research in alternate sales environments with less turnover might produce different findings associated with transformational leadership behaviours (MacKenzie et al., 2001). This is relevant because it has been identified that transformational leadership behaviours work well in environments characterised by change and focused on delivering long-term business outcomes (Bass, 1985).

Jaramillo and Mulki (2008) demonstrated that supportive leadership leads to higher salesperson effort, impacting sales performance through a process that involves intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. While this study did use self-reporting measures, which do not always produce the most accurate results, it provided evidence that under a supportive leader, salespeople are more motivated, and make more effort to ensure their customer needs are met (Jaramillo and Mulki, 2008). Since transformational leadership creates intrinsic motivation, and the desire to perform beyond expectations (Bass, 1985), this research suggests that transformational leadership behaviours may also be helpful in improving sales effort and resulting performance.

It is important to recognise that in some sales situations and contexts, the positive relationship type of leadership styles is not appropriate. As early as 1991, evidence suggested the situational leadership method (SLM) was not the best model to impact sales performance (Butler et al., 1991). In this study of insurance sales representatives, it was found that SLM prescriptions were associated with inferior sales performance. The prescriptions of SLM, based on task and relationship styles, did not lead to superior performance in a sales management setting (Butler et al., 1991). The data supported that a one best style model of high task and low relationship had the strongest positive effect on sales

performance (Butler et al., 1991). This leads to an understanding that in this context a high relationship leadership focus may not be the right solution. This could be because there is such pressure on the sales team to perform and the task of reaching the numbers becomes the most important role. This could also be because this insurance industry is a relatively low change environment (MacKenzie et al., 2001), where a high-relationship with the sales leader is not as important as in a high-change environment. This is relevant because it illustrates that the context of the sales environment of research in sales (e.g., a low change environment versus a high-change environment), and the pressure to deliver results is quite important to understand the relationship between leadership behaviours and salesperson performance.

Evidence in support of transactional leadership styles and behaviours

Dubinsky et al. (1995) found that “a transactional leadership approach may be preferable to a transformational leadership style for enhancing salespeople’s affect and behavioural responses” (Dubinsky et al., 1995, p. 17). In this study of 200 sales staff and 47 sales managers, 174 reports were obtained via a self-administered questionnaire. The main purpose of the study was “to determine if the use of sales managers’ transformational leadership induces improved levels of salesperson work outcomes beyond transactional leadership” (Dubinsky et al., 1995, p. 25). Of the 11 work outcomes measured (job satisfaction, commitment, role conflict, role ambiguity, job stress, burnout, salesperson extra effort, job congruence, multidimensional performance, percent of quota, percent of prior year sales), transformational leadership was only significantly related to two work outcomes of commitment and role ambiguity, while transactional leadership was significantly related to three work outcomes of job satisfaction, commitment, and multidimensional performance (Dubinsky et al., 1995). The authors suggested a variety of reasons to explain “the general inability of sales manager transformational leadership to explain unique variance (through hierarchical regression analysis) in salesperson work outcomes” (Dubinsky et al., 1995, p. 26). These reasons included the nature of the sales role, the context of the sales environment of the study (low change sales environment) and they suggested

that the selling position itself did not foster development of a close relationship between sales managers and their sales representatives (Dubinsky et al., 1995). Based on these results, the authors proposed that “given that a traditional planning and evaluation “window” for salespeople is twelve months (or less), perhaps transactional leadership is better suited for a selling context than transformational leadership” (Dubinsky et al., 1995, p. 27).

One limitation of the Dubinsky et al. (1995) study, is that the stable successful company they studied did not provide the right context to encourage transformational leadership needs (Dubinsky et al., 1995). The sales team studied was described as quite ‘junior’ in their positions and relatively new to the company, and it was proposed that this may not have been the best environment or context to research transformational leadership behaviours (Dubinsky et al., 1995). Another limitation of the study is that four leadership behaviours (charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration) were treated as one underlying construct called transformational leadership. This may be problematic as MacKenzie et al. (2001) later found that intellectual stimulation (one of the four leadership behaviours) negatively impacts sales performance. The authors believe this occurs because this behaviour tends to reduce trust and increase role ambiguity in the short-term (MacKenzie et al., 2001). Separating out the transformational behaviours individually may have provided different insights.

Additional evidence was found that women sales managers’ use of transformational leadership behaviours might not be conducive to fostering high levels of performance from sales teams (Dubinsky et al., 1996), and it was suggested that the transactional leadership style may be more effective for women to help generate higher sales performance. This demonstrates the importance of understanding the person in sales leadership when determining a leadership style. Future research focused on leadership in sales should include an analysis of both transactional and transformational leadership styles, to determine if their relative benefits are person and/or context dependent.

Context dependence of leadership style on sales performance

The importance of context within the sales environment was also identified by Arnold et al. (2009) who suggested that in competitive environments transformational leadership behaviours may work best when selling services, while transactional leadership may be more suitable when selling products. These findings demonstrate a trade-off between product and service sales in a competitive environment when using leadership approaches, confirming the importance of identifying context in sales. Arnold et al. (2009) also identified that effort positively influences the sale of products, while planning enhanced the sale of services. This research did not find support for a direct effect of transformational leadership on overall store performance (Arnold et al., 2009), confirming results from other studies that transformational leadership behaviours do not always result in increased sales performance (Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Arnold et al. (2009) found that the importance of specific leadership behaviours seems to depend on the level of direct competition. "The benefits gained by charismatic transformational leaders thus may pay off only when the retailer sells services in highly competitive environments; transformational leaders appear less effective at promoting product sales when competitive rivalry increases" (Arnold et al., 2009). This research provided evidence that transformational leadership behaviours can make a positive impact on selling services in competitive environments, and for selling products, store manager selling efforts appear to be the most important factor of success (Arnold et al., 2009).

Context has also been highlighted as an important consideration in leadership studies (Ladkin, 2010) and this seems especially true in sales environments. The sales environment is typically a highly-empowered setting where salespeople are working to support both customers and their own organisation. Ahearne et al. (2005) investigated the impact of empowerment and leadership behaviours in a sales environment to understand the impact on sales performance. Inexperienced salespeople with low levels of product and industry knowledge benefited the most from leadership behaviours that were empowering, whereby

high-knowledge, experienced salespeople gained no clear benefit (Ahearne et al., 2005). This was contrary to their expected findings, demonstrating a theme that was noticed in the literature review, which is that the sales context provides different leadership challenges to traditional environments. It was found that the choice of leadership behaviours may impact performance more effectively if the leader adapts to individual salespersons requirements (Ahearne et al., 2005), and it was identified that further research in this area was required.

Selling behaviours

There has been considerable research conducted on the link between different selling behaviours and sales performance (Plank and Reid, 1994; Walker et al., 1977; Weitz, 1979). Walker et al. (1977) provided a model in which selling behaviours were key predictors of overall sales effectiveness (Plank and Reid, 1994). Weitz (1979) built on this work to provide a new model based on 4 types of sales behaviours 1) adapting to customers, 2) establishing an influence base, 3) using influencing techniques, and 4) controlling the sales interaction. Plank and Reid (1994) introduced a model, where sales behaviours were treated as mediating variables between inputs such as motivation, skill level and outputs, or dependent variables of sales performance and sales effectiveness. Along with this work, there has also been research on sales management with an emphasis on the sales manager and sales representative relationship (Castleberry and Tanner, 1986; DelVecchio, 1998; Dubinsky, 1999). Sales team effort, helping behaviour and sales planning is positively related to sales team performance (Arnold et al., 2009). The research above has demonstrated that individual selling behaviours impact sales performance.

Verbeke et al. (2011), provided research focused on key selling activities and behaviours related to sales performance. The Verbeke et al. (2011) study provided a meta-analysis, using a collection of sales and marketing studies to demonstrate that salespeople function as knowledge brokers who transfer knowledge to customers. The authors identified five sub-categories with significant relationships to sales performance, including: selling-related knowledge, degree of adaptiveness, role ambiguity, cognitive aptitude and work

engagement (Verbeke et al., 2001). They also proposed that salespeople who are leaders will usually find support from colleagues and customers (Verbeke et al., 2011). Thus, they proposed that internal support, among other concepts, may be a link (mediator) between leadership and sales performance.

Brashear et al. (1997) looked at salesperson behaviour as antecedents and links to performance. They reported that high performing salespeople spend more time selling and servicing clients (Brashear et al., 1997).

Bass (1997) considers transformational leadership behaviours and selling behaviours. Bass (1997) suggested that transformational leadership behaviours such as idealised influence/visioning could be used to help build buyers and internal colleagues trust, and that individualised consideration/coaching could be used to coach buyers and internal colleagues to help them help themselves; sharing important marketing information. These are examples of transformational leader behaviours that can be used to service customers and achieve improved sales effectiveness and performance (Bass, 1997).

The importance of generative mechanisms

Schwepker, Jr. and Good (2010) conducted a study to determine if transformational leadership influences business-to-business salespeople's trust in the organisation as a generative mechanism, and whether trust in the organisation affects moral judgment, and if moral judgment in turns affects salesperson performance. The results of their study of 345 business to business salespeople suggest that transformational leadership can be used to influence sales performance through trust in the organisation and salesperson moral judgment (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010).

It was found that authentic leadership is related to both sales performance and trust (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). This research (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009), was identified as the first empirical test of authentic leadership in sales literature. The study provides new evidence on how authentic leadership impacts sales performance, and provides additional evidence that trust is a mediator to performance. This study also found that follower psychological capital has a

relationship with trust, which mediates the relationship with sales performance, and the results of the study provide evidence that followers and their psychological states are important to consider when regarding the link between sales leadership and sales performance (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). Thus “because the level of follower PsyCap (psychological capital) had a positive relationship with the level of trust that groups had in their company leadership, we come closer to understanding not only the states and behaviours of the leaders that are crucial to organisational performance, but also the role of follower’s positivity” (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009, p. 237). This study had a small sample size and only one indicator of performance, and was conducted in a short-term 4-month timeframe. The research provides an interesting link between sales leadership and sales performance by representing both the leader and the follower and providing an objective measure of unit performance, suggesting that psychological capital and trust have a meaningful relationship with sales performance (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009).

The quality of the exchange relationship is an important linkage and or mechanism between sales leadership and sales performance. “Sales typically involves less direct supervision and more latitude in directing activity than many jobs, but sales performance can vary depending upon territory allocation and sales budget or quota, and may depend on a salesperson’s ability to obtain concessions from upper management for customers. Thus, the vertical dyad leadership theory has great appeal as a tool for understanding and managing a sales force, as sales performance may ultimately depend on the quality of the exchange relationships between sales managers and salespersons” (Castleberry and Tanner, 1986). It was also recently found by Ahearne et al. (2010) that interpersonal climate plays an important role to impact the results of a leadership behaviour, and that managers need to focus on fostering a positive interpersonal climate on sales teams (Ahearne et al., 2010).

Another consideration that developed because of the review is the concept of leadership substitutes as a generative mechanism. It was found that leadership substitutes moderate the relationship between sales supervisory behaviours and

salesperson job satisfaction (Childers et al., 1990). The research found that salespeople's job satisfaction, and resulting sale performance can be increased with appropriate leadership behaviour, but it can be augmented even more when such behaviour operates with the leadership substitute of customers. The customer leadership substitute was found to work in tandem with sales managers to help augment salesperson job satisfaction. This result shows the important impact customers can have on salespeople. Customers do lead salespeople, and help provide information and guidance, as well as support to help the salesperson win or lose the business during the sales process. In some situations, a customer may act as a coach if there is inclination to help the salesperson win the business.

A more recent mediating link identified between sales leadership and sales performance is moral judgment. In the study by Schwepker, Jr. and Good (2010) a direct relationship between moral judgment and sales performance was identified, and it was found that managers who practiced transformational leadership behaviours can influence salespeople's moral judgment and subsequent performance and client satisfaction (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010).

2.4.1 Leadership behaviours identified in the sales leadership literature

A deeper analysis of the literature in relation to leadership behaviours is provided in this section.

2.4.1.1 Visioning behaviours

Leaders use the visioning behaviour when they communicate an inspiring vision of the future (Bass, 1985). This behaviour helps the leader to create a shared vision of the future based on the salespersons and customers and organizations partnerships and goals. The sales leader leads by example on sales calls and works with the sales representatives to seek new opportunities and ideas for the sales team and the customer. This behaviour is used when the sales leader helps to demonstrate value to the customers and sales team.

2.4.1.2 Inspiring behaviours

The inspiring leadership behaviour seems important in the sales context based on the literature review. This leader behaviour generates excitement at work when sales leaders communicate the vision in compelling ways. Sales managers need to communicate vision and solutions with passion and conviction, expressing optimism about the future. Sales leaders inspire salespeople and customers with enthusiasm and inspiration (Jaramillo, 2009). Sales management can focus on this behaviour to provide persuasive arguments with their team, customers and management to help increase salesperson performance. It can be used to help the sales team learn the value proposition, and to teach them to communicate value to the customer in a concise and effective manner, as this is critical to success. Sales presentations to the team and clients are a regular part of the sales leadership job. This behaviour often comes naturally to sales leaders as they generate excitement in their business by communicating in compelling way to internal and external stakeholders. As the motivation of salespeople influences their selling effectiveness (Tyagi, 1985), inspiring leader behaviours may enhance performance by impacting salespeople's motivation.

2.4.1.3 Challenging/Stimulating behaviours

In the new sales environment, salesperson creativity is an important competency (Evans et al., 2012). A leader should aim to stimulate creativity and problem solving skills in their team, so that salespeople can, in turn, use these skills to add value to their customers and to differentiate themselves. Bass described this leader behaviour as intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1985). This behaviour enables followers to think about old problems in new ways and arouses interest in ideas and new approaches. Sales leaders can use this behaviour to encourage the sales team to consider how they work, rethink ideas, and or problems when working with customers, and question old ways of doing things. Sales leaders can use industry and product knowledge to provide compelling reasons for customers to invest with them. They provide value by helping their sales representatives solve problems using new ideas and approaches with customers. With this behaviour, sales leaders can encourage the use of clear reasoning to

solve problems and help the sales team to act as consultative sales representatives, helping to identify customer pain points and problems. As well they can help perform a needs analysis and find alignment between their products and services and the customer's needs.

Dixon and Adamson (2011) find that top performing salespeople are using challenger (stimulating) behaviours to consistently deliver high performance. Challengers provide customers with surprising insights about how they can save or make money and tailor their message to the customer's needs and objectives. Dixon and Adamson (2011) also suggest that 'pushing back when necessary and taking control of the sale' are elements of this behaviour which enable success. Sales managers can use this leader behaviour to make an impact with customers and the salespeople they are leading.

Wang and Netemeyer (2004) view salesperson creativity as evidenced when the salesperson generates and evaluates new solutions for old problems, sees old problems from a different perspective, defines and solves a new problem, or detects a neglected problem. They define salesperson creative performance as "the amount of new ideas generated and novel behaviours exhibited by the salesperson in performing his or her job activities" (Wang and Netemeyer, 2004, p. 806). Confident salespeople, including sales leaders, have been defined as more willing to innovate and try different approaches on the moment than less confident people. (Ahearne et al., 2005). Examples include making sales presentations in a new way; creating new ideas for satisfying customer needs; generating and evaluating alternatives for novel customer problems; generating new solutions for old problems; and generating creative and new selling ideas (Wang and Netemeyer, 2004). It was proposed that creative ideas in sales may improve the "efficiency and effectiveness of daily task activities, help expand the customer base, increase customer satisfaction, thereby contributing to overall sales performance." (Wang and Netemeyer, 2004, p. 806).

There seems to be a connection between the challenging leader behaviour and the need for salespeople to engage in creativity (Dixon and Adams, 2011). This is particularly important in sales, as the sales team working closely with the

customer and has strong industry knowledge (Evans and Maio, 2011). In complex sales contexts where salespeople are asked to identify and engage in innovation solutions, it is important for the sales leaders to encourage new idea generation and creativity. The sales team often understands the trends and directions of the business more quickly than any other area of the business, due to their interaction with customers. The team is on the front line with the customer, and has access to more information. Thus, encouraging sales representatives to bring new insights, express different viewpoints, and solve problems may help develop this creativity within the sales team, with customers, and could ultimately create solutions that help increase revenue (Bass, 1997).

While creativity is considered important for the sales team (Evans et al., 2012), the intellectual stimulation leader behaviour was found to have no relationship to sales productivity (Humphreys, 2002). Another study found the intellectual stimulation leadership behaviour to negatively impact salesperson performance in the short-term (MacKenzie et al., 2001). This surprising result was explained as the behaviour was thought to diminish trust and increase role ambiguity (MacKenzie et al., 2001). However, intellectual stimulation helps others identify better ways of doing their jobs, which may be good in the long-run. It is the behaviour that has empirically been proven to be more successful when leading customers (Dixon and Adamson, 2011). It was interesting to note that Evans et al. (2012) suggested “there is a strong emphasis on incorporating both idea generation and behaviour in capturing the creativity of the sales force” (Evans et al., 2012, p. 92), and they identified similar behaviours to intellectual stimulation to help improve sales performance.

2.4.1.4 Coaching behaviours

Sales coaching is “a sequence of conversations and activities that provides ongoing feedback and encouragement to a salesperson or sales team member with the goal of improving that person’s performance” (Corcoran et al., 1995, p.118). The main coaching aspects that will be considered in the following section, include descriptions of the coaching leadership behaviour, a summary of

the research identified in the systematic literature review and suggested activities for sales leaders to undertake to implement the coaching behaviour.

A key description of the coaching leadership behaviour is to help followers recognise opportunities to improve their performance through “hands on” assistance. Working in intense dialogue with the sales team, the sales manager asks insightful questions and listens attentively to the sales representatives and or customers. They show genuine concern about their needs and provide constructive feedback. Sales managers who coach help the sales representatives recognize opportunities to improve their solution, expressing encouragement and support. They provide learning opportunities for sales respect, such as lunch and learns and product briefing and training. They express confidence about the representatives’ ability to meet sales quota and provide information and internal resources to enable success. By coaching, supporting, respecting and listening to salespeople, they in turn can help enhance customer’s responsiveness. The coaching leader behaviour is a component of the transformational leadership style, referred to as ‘Individual Consideration’ (Bass, 1985).

For sales leaders, the research is clear that sales coaching leader behaviour makes a significant impact. Based on the research findings of Good (1993) it was suggested that when sales managers increased the time they spent coaching, they could help improve the long-term outcome of the salesperson. As a key leader behaviour of transformational leadership theory, evidence has demonstrated that this behaviour in conjunction with the other transformational behaviours leads to increased performance (Howell and Avolio, 1993). A publication by McKinsey suggests that coaching is the key to success of leading sales organisations, and proposes that corporations begin to view coaching as a core component of sales management, rather than a nice idea (Baumgartner et al., 2011). Good (1993) suggested that coaching is one of the most widely implemented managerial strategies designed to increase sales performance. More recently Shannahan et al. (2013) found that coaching and the transformational leadership style influences sales performance through

salesperson coachability. The evidence in the literature demonstrates that it is important for sales leaders to use coaching to enhance their team's performance.

There are specific activities that sales leaders can use to apply the coaching behaviour to the sales environment. Territory planning, sales funnel/pipeline management, key account strategies, executive selling, providing feedback, and selling skills fundamentals are important when leading sales teams. While it can be challenging to determine if somebody is making the right adaptations to specific sales behaviours (Evans et al., 2012), research shows that going out on sales calls with sales representatives, and coaching them directly will help generate improved performance, provided the feedback directly follows a selling behaviour (Rich, 1998). Coaching in sales involves the salesperson, sales manager, and often the customer. Sales leaders should help build the sales representatives capabilities, and it has been suggested that using proven best practices, utilised by the highest performing representatives, will help improve sales performance (Baumgartner et al., 2011). Regular presentation rehearsals in front of sales managers can help create a culture of coaching. Also, the use of role play training techniques can help sales representatives articulate their value proposition in the moment with customers. Sales leaders may provide new opportunities, such as joining cross-functional teams, to help develop individual sales representative's skills.

Based on the research findings of Good (1993), it was suggested that when sales managers increased the time they spent coaching, they could help improve the long-term outcome of the salesperson. As the coaching construct is explored, it is also interesting to note that some research shows that people only make changes with positive feedback (Jaworski and Kohli, 1991; Podsakoff et al., 1982). In addition, in the sales environment many sales leaders are under such pressure to reach quota that they do not consistently focus on this leader behaviour. Coaching sales teams can be challenging; however, the literature indicates the influence of this behaviour on sales performance is positive, and thus sales leaders should learn the skill of providing the right type of feedback to help an individual sales representative maximise his or her own performance.

2.4.1.5 Teambuilding behaviours

Teambuilding shows a belief in the team's purpose and in the people who, individually and together, make up the team. By using this behaviour, sales managers encourage the sales team, colleagues, customers, and alliance partners to work together towards a common goal. They pull together resources and performance to enable a successful outcome for the team, draw on salesperson's knowledge and skills to help respond to customers and provide results. Aspects of this behaviour may be shown when sales leaders mobilise internal resources to support sales teams. Teambuilding can help build commitment of the sales team and enable the salespeople to help themselves.

With the increase of sales teams, technical specialists, and sales support people, teamwork is growing in importance in sales. Salespeople can use teambuilding behaviours to ensure success in their organisation, both with customers and internally. The sales leader and salespeople must be able to effectively marshal internal resources to provide value to their customers (Ingram et al., 2005). Accessing resources for customers is a critical activity to enable the creation of customer value (Dixon and Adamson, 2011). Sales team members can improve their teamwork skills and lead internally to manage intra-organisational resources of their firms to achieve better performance (Plouffe and Barclay, 2007). Chi et al. (2011) found that sales leader behaviours impacted positive group affective tone and sales performance.

2.4.1.6 Rewarding behaviours

This behaviour, which is found under the transactional leadership style and is also called contingent reward (Bass, 1985). This behaviour provides appropriate recognition and or reward when individuals meet agreed upon objectives (Bass, 1985). Key sales management behaviours in this concept, include negotiating and setting high performance objectives with the sales team. Communicating clearly the results expected in the sales plan and tracking with outlook forecasting systems. It clarifies the outcome for reaching stated objectives to the sales team and provides direction and support in expectation of required effort. It is important in sales to celebrate accomplishment when sales milestones and numbers are

reached. This leadership behaviour gives recognition to individuals on the sales team when they meet agreed upon objectives. This has been a proven behaviour and leadership style that works in the sales context (Dubinsky et al., 1995; Dubinsky et al., 1996; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Based on the literature it seems important to continue the use of this behaviour in this environment.

2.4.1.7 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey and Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Emotional Intelligence has been associated with sales performance (Boyatzis et al., 2012; Rozell et al., 2004).

In a recent study, it was found by Boyatzis et al. (2012) that emotional intelligence significantly predicted sales leader performance. The study tested the relationship between emotional and social intelligence (ESI) and effectiveness of sales leaders. The results showed that adaptability and influence were significant predictors of the number of financial consultants recruited, which was the sales performance measure of this study (Boyatzis et al., 2012). The researchers inferred that ESI is an overall factor of importance to recruitment and sales performance. The research suggested that the role of the specific ESI competencies of adaptability and influence are important to consider when managing a sales force (Boyatzis et al., 2012). These findings suggest the importance of training future sales leaders about the emotional aspects of leadership in influencing followers to reach their sales targets. However, as ESI competencies are attributes/skills that partly determine behaviour, training of ESI may be more difficult to achieve than with other tools or behaviours, and research should focus on whether emotional development can be developed through training (Barling et al., 2000).

Emotional and social intelligence may relate to the authentic leadership style which focuses on developing a deep level of self-awareness by the leader. Considering that emotional intelligence has self-awareness as a key component of this school of thought, there may be a link here to consider for sales leadership.

In summary, emotional intelligence has been identified as a determinant of success that can be used to help sales leaders be more effective in the sales environment (Boyatzis et al., 2012). It may provide an interesting opportunity for sales leaders to use to improve their effectiveness.

2.4.2 Generative mechanisms identified in the sales leadership literature

Based on this systematic literature review, it seems when salespeople see their sales leaders' use the above-mentioned leadership styles and/or behaviours they will have greater trust in their leaders, and this has been proven to lead to an increase in sales performance (Rich, 1997). Furthermore, it has been proposed that increasing customer orientation will impact performance (Jaramillo et al., 2009). It is also interesting to consider the possibility that salespeople's psychological capital may have an impact on the sales performance (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). The following section will describe these generative mechanisms found in the literature.

2.4.2.1 Trust

Trust plays an important role in the buyer seller relationship, the leaders follower relationship and ultimately in sales performance (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). Trust in the sales leader is defined as the extent to which sales representatives believe in the fairness and integrity of their leaders (MacKenzie et al., 2001). As trust enhances relationship development it is important to understand how to build trust. Schwepker, Jr. and Good (2010) found there to be a positive relationship between a sales manager's use of transformational leadership behaviours and salesperson's trust in the sales manager. They argued that transformational leadership builds trust (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). Mackenzie et al. (2001) argued that honest, high integrity sales leaders will be trusted, and may even encourage others to act similarly. This supports Bass (1985) findings that transformational leadership involves fundamentally changing the values, goals and aspirations of team members, so that they perform their work because it is consistent with values, as opposed to the expectation that they will be rewarded for their efforts. Schwepker, Jr. and Good (2010) found that

transformational sales managers can create a sense of purpose, commitment, and trust which often translates into stronger sales performance (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). If we extend this thinking to the buyer seller relationship, salespeople could focus on developing trust with their customers, using transformational leadership behaviours and potentially increase their sales performance and success.

Abeyserkera et al. (2011) proposed that a major outcome of transformational leadership is trust and commitment, which are key variables in relationship marketing and sales. It was proposed that understanding how sales behaviour and trust link with transformational leadership to generate sales performance is important (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). “In linking transformational leadership and trust in the organisation, managers can demonstrate strong transformational behaviours (verbalising a vision, providing a behaviour model, nurturing the acceptance of group goals, etc.) to engage trust among salespeople. This indicates management can purposefully shape trust-building actions. For example, regular sales meetings and individual coaching exercises are excellent opportunities to demonstrate key leader behaviours (e.g., open communications) designed to build salesforce trust” (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). This implies that certain leadership behaviours create trust, and this mechanism may help improve sales performance.

2.4.2.2 Customer Orientation

Customer-oriented selling has been described as how salespeople “help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs” (Saxe and Weitz, 1982, p. 344). Salespeople can adopt two different orientations: a selling orientation, characterised by a short-term, self-focused, and high-pressure approach, or a customer selling orientation, which aims at helping customers to satisfy their needs to increase their long-term satisfaction (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). A customer selling orientation can impact sales performance (Saxe and Weitz, 1982).

Research by Jaramillo et al. (2009) identified customer orientation as a mediator between leadership and sales performance. This research found evidence “that

salespeople who viewed their managers as servant leaders exhibited higher levels of customer orientation and were more likely to engage in adaptive selling behaviours and customer-directed extra-role performance. These factors are known to be important to the development of strong relationships with customers” (Jaramillo et al., 2009, p. 12). A more recent conceptual paper suggested that “leadership activities have stronger positive effects on salespeople’s customer orientation than on salespeople’s selling orientation” (Martin, 2013). As a result, the interest in customer orientation as a potential generative mechanism for sales performance is present.

2.4.2.3 Psychological capital

Psychological capital consists of four psychological attributes of confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience, which are described as having an impact on leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Psychological capital has been proposed as both an antecedent and a consequence of authentic leadership, and it has been suggested as needing greater attention (Caza and Jackson, 2010). It was identified that individuals with high Psychological Capital make more effort in task accomplishment and goal planning (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998) which can relate to sales performance. As transformational leadership has an explicit moral dimension, similar to authentic leadership (Northouse, 2010), it may be interesting to explore if these positive attributes enhance a sales leader’s impact when using the sales leadership behaviours (based on elements of transformational leadership behaviour) to enhance sales performance.

It is interesting to consider the elements of psychological capital and relate these to the literature.

Confidence, and self-efficacy is the belief in one’s ability to accomplish a specific task (Northouse, 2010). Sales leaders with high self-efficacy and confidence are more likely to be motivated to succeed and to act due to a strong belief in their skills and abilities, even when challenges are present (Bandura 1977; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). It was found by Ahearne et al. (2005) that highly self-efficacious salespeople may be better able to handle job challenges, and thus

enabled job performance. Self-efficacy has been related to sales performance in various studies (e.g., Ahearne et al., 2005).

Another element of psychological capital is hope. Hope is based on strength, will power, and goal planning (Northouse, 2010). Will power can provide the drive to attain the goal, and planning may help people find a way to achieve the goal (Northouse, 2010). High levels of hope have been associated with deriving more pathways to accomplish goals, and is associated with goal achievement, and thus it was suggested that elements of hope might be related to higher levels of performance in the sales context (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009).

A third element of psychological capital is optimism. Optimism refers to the way people think about causes and the process of viewing situations and life events from a positive explanatory styles and/or positive light (Seligman, 2011). Sales people with optimism will be people who have a positive explanatory style and attribute success internally, and attribute failure to external circumstances, resulting in more positive expectancies of outcomes, which will likely be associated with higher levels of performance (Seligman, 1998).

The final element of psychological capital is resiliency. Resilience is the capacity to bounce back or adjust to adverse or negative events and situations (Luthans, 2002). Avolio (2007) suggested that resiliency is positively related to performance because setbacks will occur, and that the extent to which an individual respond to these setbacks would impact performance. Like the Clapp-Smith (2009) model, which was based on authentic leadership in sales, it seems that a relationship may exist in some way between leadership behaviours, elements of psychological capital and sales performance.

2.5 Overall summary of the literature review

Overall, the findings in this systematic review indicate that while sales performance remains a complex issue, opportunities exist to impact sales performance through sales leadership.

The overall purpose of this systematic literature review was to explore the relationship between sales leadership and sales performance. The review

focused on investigating how leadership styles and leadership schools of thought influenced the performance of sales people. In so doing, there was a goal to understand whether sales leaders who apply specific leader behaviours produce greater sales performance than those who demonstrate fewer leader behaviours. In addition, the consideration of mediators of the link between leadership and sales performance, and how they are related to performance outcomes was considered.

The emerging research question based on the literature review, relates to gaining a better understanding of how leadership behaviours enable sales performance, based on sales leaders' and sales representatives' (followers' perceptions). Outlined below is an overall summary from the literature identified in the literature review, which leads to the emerging research question.

Opportunity to identify leadership behaviours specific to the sales context

The existing conceptualisation of leadership behaviours and sales performance focuses primarily on the transformational and transactional leadership models, but fails to identify if a specific set of leadership behaviours, e.g. a new model is more relevant to the sales context. For example, Martin (2013) states: "In spite of this newly recognised importance of leadership, the sales literature does not provide precise, unique, and consistent definitions of the activities covered by sales management and leadership". This suggests an opportunity to explore these types of leadership activities in the sales environment. Others have remarked that "...an important first step would be for sales researchers to precisely define the type of (leadership) activities being studied" (Ingram et al., 2005, p. 149). Based on the literature, there seems to be an opportunity to consider specific leadership behaviours that work best in the sales context, rather than applying an existing leadership school of thought.

The relationships found in the literature provide a strategic guide for sales organisations, and management tools that assist in sales performance outcomes. The study indicates that 'emotional intelligence' approaches may positively impact sales performance (Ahearne et al., 2005), and that leadership behaviours identified in Authentic Leadership (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009) and Servant

Leadership (Jaramillo et al., 2009) were found to positively predict performance growth. It also suggested that the servant leadership style leads to increased customer focus and improved sales results (Jaramillo et al., 2009). Although the servant leadership style does not necessarily fit the transactional outcome-based sales environment, the implementation of the concepts and behaviours of this leadership style may positively impact sales results by increasing the focus on customer development. There seems to be scope to better understand how different leadership approaches impact sales performance.

The research implies that elements of transformational and transactional leadership styles may be appropriate for the sales environment. As noted, there is some evidence that the practice of some transformational leadership behaviours by sales professionals positively impacts sales performance (Arnold et al., 2009; Mackenzie et al., 2001; Shannahan et al., 2013). As a result, the investigation suggests that some key behaviours outlined in the Bass model (1985) of transformational leadership should be included as appropriate leadership behaviours for the current sales environment, which is immersed in change, driven by technological advancements. The transactional leadership style is meant to augment transformational, and it is also important in this context (Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). It has even been proposed that “the majority of research investigating the sales manager/sales productivity relationship, however, assumes that the sales manager is employing a transactional leadership style.” (Flaherty et al., 2008, p. 5).

Overall, there have been unexpected results in the research conducted in this area. While the evidence and arguments for these leadership approaches are valid, the evidence is not as strong and consistent as expected (e.g., Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Although some relationships did exist, it was found that certain leadership behaviours, for example transformational leadership behaviours were not highly correlated to sales performance on a number of studies (Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Each of these studies were conducted in a

consumer based, shorter-term sales environment. Thus, a research gap was identified and there seems to be scope to conduct similar research in different longer-term sales contexts. The review also indicated that the transformational leader behaviour of “stimulating” may have an inverse relationship to sales performance (MacKenzie et al., 2001). As creativity is considered important to success in sales in the current environment (Ingram et al., 2005) it is worth revisiting this result and to better understand if that leader behaviour, and what other leadership behaviours may have a positive impact on sales.

Integrative leadership consideration is important in sales

Limited sales leadership research exists on more integrative leadership styles and behaviours that recognise the importance of the relationship between the followers and leaders. Apart from select empirical articles (Chi et al., 2011; Clapp-Smith et al., 2009; Flaherty et al., 2008), the focus is primarily on the “leader element” in this field of research. In the context of a sales organisation that relies upon followers who often take on leadership roles with customers and internally, it is important to consider an integrated leadership approach and the impact of followers.

Leadership behaviours in the selling process are becoming important skills, not only for sales leaders but also for individual sales representatives. Ingram et al. (2005) suggested that leadership activities should be used at all sales organisation levels and the key focus should be on activities not positions. They proposed that sales people need to engage in self-leadership activities to develop and expand relationships with customers and business partners (Ingram et al., 2005). This was also identified by Flaherty et al. (2011) who proposed that “there are moments when the sales person will engage in leadership behaviours. While sales research taking, this perspective remains limited, empirical studies in a management context provide some evidence that such a shared team leadership approach results in enhanced team morale and performance (Avolio, 1999).” (Flaherty et al., 2011, p. 62). It is important to consider the “followership” element as the research is appropriate to both sales leaders, who are managing sales

teams and providing internal leadership, and to the sales representatives who are managing customers and providing external leadership.

MacKenzie et al. (2001) demonstrated that some transformational leadership behaviours (coaching) are associated with higher levels of extra role performance, effort and sales performance. There are also positive correlations identified between transformational leadership and higher effort and sales performance (Arnold et al., 2009). Transformational leadership behaviours are important to consider in the sales environment, as it has been found that these behaviours help develop trust between sales manager and sales representative (Rich, 1997), which has been found to positively influence sales performance (MacKenzie et al., 2001). In addition, leadership behaviours are important to both sales leaders and sales representatives, as they may lead to stronger customer focus, which may ultimately lead to improved sales results (Jarmillo et al., 2009). As the previous results indicated that some transformational leadership behaviours can impact effort and trust, and as effort and trust have been shown to increase salesperson performance, it seems that leadership behaviours are important to consider in relation to salesperson performance

The research has also demonstrated that leadership behaviours can make an impact when providing leadership, both internally and externally. While leadership behaviours may be easier to measure and control internally, there is still an opportunity to apply them to external customers.

Perceptions may impact sales performance

The difference between perceptions of leadership behaviours, and desires for leadership behaviours may have an impact on sales performance, therefore it is important to consider the salesperson/sales team's perceptions. Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) suggests that people acting through self-interest adopt courses of action perceived as maximising the probability of desired outcomes (Issac et al., 2001). Based on findings from Decarlo et al. (1999) there is evidence that congruence between perceived and desired consideration leadership behaviours (of the contingency leadership theories) impacts a salesperson's intrinsic job satisfaction and effort. Congruency of these factors provides a

positively reinforcing experience, and incongruent perceptions of leadership behaviours were proven to have a negative influence on a salesperson's intrinsic job satisfaction and effort. As a result, a sales leader may think they provide a set of leadership behaviours; however, it was found that unless this behaviour is desired and provided in a desired amount, it may be difficult for the sales leader to achieve the desired outcomes (Decarlo et al., 1999). In some cases, sales leaders may need to alter salespersons' perceptions, rather than their own behaviours (Decarlo et al., 1999). Therefore, it is important to understand the sales representatives' perceptions and desired leader behaviours to impact sales performance.

Exploration of generative mechanisms is warranted

Unpacking the generative mechanisms that moderate or mediate the relationship between sales leadership styles/behaviours and sales performance is important to future research. As mentioned previously, there are a variety of generative mechanisms that have been identified in the literature to mediate the relationship between sales leadership styles/behaviour and sales performance, however more research is required. As identified by Flaherty et al. (2008) "an investigation of the many leader and follower psychological variables that could potentially moderate the relationship between transformational sales leaders and sales and marketing followers is likely warranted." (Flaherty et al., 2008, p. 11). In the literature, there was no empirical work that explored follower psychological capital as a generative mechanism, and the focus on customer orientation as a mechanism is a relatively new concept (Jaramillo et al., 2009). There was one empirical study on authentic leadership which considered follower psychological capital as intervention (Clap Smith et al., 2009), rather than a generative mechanism. The literature generally did not explore elements of the followers, and was primarily leader centric in its approach. The research needs to evolve to better understand the follower and leader relationship, and the generative mechanisms between leadership behaviours and sales performance.

Limited research on groups in sales

Limited research exists on the group dynamics within the sales environment. Apart from selected empirical sales leadership studies (Ahearne et al., 2010), the research fails to consider the importance of the social reality and group dynamic. In the literature review, only two empirical studies proposed that the group/team was an important unit of analysis. Given that social identity and group behaviour is so important to future leadership research (Haslam et al., 2011), it is important to consider this element in the research moving forward. It is also important to consider if the phenomenon of interest is context dependent within the sales context. Based on this review, the evidence suggests that the relationship may exist in business to business sales settings, where selling occurs in long-term customer development.

Varied metrics used to measure sales performance

In the systematic literature review it became apparent that the metrics used to quantify sales performance have not been consistent across studies. The sales performance metric as a key dependent variable needs to be clearly identified and standardised for this research to advance. That is challenging as the current selling environment suggests “that multiple conceptual or substantive types of sales performance achievements exist” (Evans et al., 2012).

Different approaches to sales performance may have links to different leadership styles, making sales performance an integral part of the research methodology considerations. If a sales organisation’s operational system measures sales performance primarily on outcome based measures, a more transactional leadership style may be appropriate, as this style is based on contingent reward structure. However, if the organisation is more focused on improving sales behaviours to help increase sales performance, transformational leadership may make a stronger impact.

There is a challenge in researching this topic, as there are limited controls available in existing studies. Much of the literature was completed with a positive research perspective by conducting surveys on leadership and then looking at

factors of sales performance. Thus, an opportunity exists to explore this research area using qualitative research to expand the field, as we can't know from existing correlational studies if leadership behaviours caused increased performance or if another variable caused the sales professional to both practice transformational and transactional leadership behaviours and have higher performance results.

As research can only explain a relatively small variance in sales performance, there is opportunity for advancing our understanding of sales performance (Evans et al., 2012), and the practice of leadership behaviours provides an interesting area to explore, based on the evidence provided in this paper.

New sales environment; new leadership challenges

Empirical studies fail to outline how to use leadership behaviours to improve sales performance within the current challenges of selling in the new digital environment. Except for two articles (Mulki and Jaramillo, 2011; Rapp et al., 2010) that considered questions arising from the new environment, including workplace isolation and managing teams in a virtual environment, the literature has not focused on the change of environment. Important considerations exist, such as, can meaningful connections utilising leadership behaviours work in this fast pace environment, using social media and software like Skype and go-to-meeting to sell? Salespeople have high performance expectations, and the results are demanded quickly and they are immediately measurable. Because of these challenges, it may be difficult to apply long-term leadership behaviours, and sales professionals may practice short-term transactional behaviours to make their quarterly driven sales quotas. Sales professionals are facing a new sales environment, where customers have information at their fingertips, and customers are more demanding and questioning the messages they hear from salespeople (Freese, 2010). As the sales environment changes, it is important for sales professionals to embrace new ideas to improve sales performance. Having critically reviewed this literature on transformational and transactional leadership behaviours in sales, both with sales leaders and personal selling, it seems clear that a research opportunity exists.

Summary

In summary, evidence in relation to sales leadership behaviours and sales performance remains an interesting, relevant and important research, both from a business and academic perspective. There is an opportunity for empirical research, which addresses the limitations identified in the above key insights.

2.6 Conclusion: Research gap and research question

There are three theoretical frameworks for understanding leadership that we will use to guide this empirical research based on the literature – Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985), Authentic Leadership Theory (Avolio and Gardner, 2005) and Followership Leadership Theory (Brown, 2012; Ladkin, 2010). Transformational leadership is a process where the leader fosters performance beyond expectation using the “full range leadership model” (Bass and Riggio, 2006), which contains both transformational and transactional leadership behaviours. Authentic leadership is a model of leadership that suggests that leaders need to be true to themselves and act accordingly. To do this they need to have knowledge about oneself (e.g., beliefs, preferences, strengths, weaknesses) and behave consistently with this knowledge (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Psychological capital, which consists of self-efficacy (confidence), hope, optimism and resilience, has been proposed as both an antecedent and a consequence of authentic leadership (Northouse, 2010). Followership leadership theory proposes that followers and leaders differ considerably in their views of leadership (Brown, 2012, p. 335), and this leads to the notion that followers “are proactive rather than passive, and that perceptions, rather than objective reality, are most relevant for understanding human behaviour”. (Brown, 2012, p. 335). Behavioural ratings of transformational leadership indicate that there are significant individual variability in ratings and that transformational leadership may exist solely in the “eye of the beholder” (Yammarino and Dubinsky, 1994, p. 792). Brown (2012) cited that “the influence afforded to an individual leader does not reside solely in his or her behavioural repertoire or skill set, but rather resides in part in the mind’s eye of relevant observers” (Hollander, 1958), and later stated that “perception is reality, and it is

our perceptions that propel us through life” (Brown, 2012, p. 335). Ladkin (2010) suggests that leadership is a collective process, including both leaders and followers, and that leadership can pass between them, and to that regard, everyone can be a leader. Thus, this research will consider perceptions of both followers and leaders, to understand how leadership behaviours can enhance sales performance, and what mediators cause this to occur.

The key focus and contribution of this research is to explore the perceptions of sales managers and sales representatives regarding what sales leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance. The research gaps identified in the literature are highlighted in the summary above. The research gaps include: 1). the opportunity for the development of a sales leadership framework, 2). the opportunity to research integrative leadership, including both the leader and the follower, 3). the opportunity to research perceptions of sales professionals, 4). the opportunity to research leadership behaviours in a longer-term complex business to business context and 5. to consider group dynamics. The literature also highlighted the changes in the modern sales environment and how leadership approaches need to adapt to these changes. The importance of understanding leadership in the sales context was identified. Overall, the current literature lacks an exploratory integrative analysis of the perceptions of sales leadership behaviours and sales performance. Thus, this thesis seeks to address the following:

The Research Question: ***What sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance?***

In addition, the research will develop a foundation for examining the following

Sub Research Question: ***If it is perceived that sales leaders enable salesperson performance using leadership behaviours, how does this occur?***

The following chapter will explain the proposed methodology, and the rationale behind the choice of a social constructionist perspective and the selection of semi-structured interviews as the method to collect data. The exploratory pilot

study and the main study will be discussed, including selection of participants, data collection and analysis.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose in this chapter is to discuss the research philosophy and design, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research and to provide an explanation of the choice of a qualitative, interpretivist approach. In Section 3.1 philosophical positions and approaches will be introduced. In Section 3.2 the philosophical perspective of a social constructionist, which shaped this research, will be explained. In Section 3.3 the research strategy and design is discussed. In Section 3.4 the fieldwork is presented, including data collection methods. In Section 3.5 the grounded approach data analysis and coding process is described, Section 3.6 discusses data validity and reliability, and the chapter is summarised in Section 3.7.

3.2 Research philosophy

This section describes the main philosophical positions of the research, including the ontological and epistemological assumptions. It will outline the traditional philosophical approaches of positivism, critical realism, and social constructionist. This will lead to the next section which provides a rationale for taking a qualitative, social constructionist methodological approach in the research design.

An important consideration for researchers is to identify ontological and epistemological assumptions and to recognise how their philosophical attitudes shape their view of the world and impacts their research (Blaikie, 2007). Research philosophy consists of three key aspects, including ontology, epistemology and methodology. *Ontological assumptions* are beliefs about the nature of reality, which show the way in which reality is viewed. *Epistemological assumptions* relate to how knowledge is acquired, outlining criteria that determine the processes of gaining knowledge (Blaike, 2007). *Methodological assumptions* are about the techniques used to enquire into a situation within the research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). These assumptions are usually situated within a *research paradigm*. Thus, it is important to reflect on a researcher's personal assumptions and attitudes. A clear philosophical approach helps inform the

research design, and helps lead to appropriate research methods. Having a methodological fit in this regard is an important consideration (Edmondson and Mcmanus, 2007).

Ontological assumptions

There are several ontological assumptions and research approaches to social science research, ranging from positivism to critical realism to the interpretivism approach of social constructionist. Three main approaches and philosophies are explained in this section.

3.2.1 Positivism

The Positivism philosophy carries an assumption that reality is objective, independent of the observer and considers that “what is to count as knowledge must be based on what an observer can perceive by his or her senses” (Blaikie, 2007, p. 110). “Positivism regards reality as consisting of discrete events that can be observed by the human senses. The only knowledge of this reality that is acceptable is that which is derived from experience, the recording of the ‘unembroidered evidence of the senses’” (Blaikie, 2007, p. 112). Objective criteria are central to this philosophy, rather than human perceptions and beliefs. Researchers search to predict how reality unfolds in a reductionist manner (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), producing objective knowledge that predicts and explains outcomes. With the positivist approach “the observer must be independent from what is being observed” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 58). Positivist research design often involves experiments and surveys to test relationships that explain events using large samples, quantitative methods, deductive logic and statistics with the development of a theory that is created from the experiment. (Blaikie, 2007).

A summary of the positivist approach is provided in Table 3-1 below.

Table 3-1 Positivist

Approach		Positivist
Reality Aims of Research Researcher Research design		Reality is based on observation (direct experience)
		Explain, predict, test
		Detached Scientist
		Quantitative methods, large sample sizes, deductive logic, statistical generalisation

Based on Blaikie (2007)

Strengths and Weaknesses

Where there is a positivist ontology underlying the research, this often takes the approach of generating hypotheses, which are then tested using statistical methods and therefore require large sample sizes. Thus, a strength of the positivist approach tends to be that notion of truth and justification of results. It provides wide coverage of the range of situations, and is potentially a faster and less expensive research approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). A weakness of the positivist approach is that by testing with statistical methods, it may be considered inflexible and artificial, and is seen as not as effective in generating theories and deriving actions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

3.2.2 Critical Realism

A more intermediated position between the main philosophical perspectives discussed is critical realism. This approach provides an example of bridging positions and assumes an objective ontology, and a subjective epistemology that recognises the knowledge is socially produced with an aim to understand, rather than predict (Blaikie, 2007; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). Proponents of critical realism suggest that an independent reality exists, and our view of this reality is influenced by subjective influences, including perceptions and thought processes (Bhaskar, 1979). This research paradigm is concerned with providing an explanation of the links between events, structures, and tendencies, and

providing an understanding of generative structures and mechanisms (Blaikie, 2007). It claims that there are three domains of reality, including the empirical (observed events), the actual (observed or unobserved events) and the real (underlying structures and mechanisms that generate the events) (Blaikie, 2007). Critical realists seek to identify and explain the underlying generative mechanisms and to build models of these mechanisms (Blaikie, 2007).

A summary of the critical realism approach is provided in Table 3-2 below.

Table 3-2 Critical Realism

Approach		Critical Realism
Reality		Reality is based on the empirical (direct experience), the actual (experience and unobservable events) and the real (invisible structural mechanisms)
Aims of Research		Identify causal relationships between events and their generative mechanisms
Researcher		Blended pragmatist scientist
Research design		Choice of research methods

Based on Blaikie (2007)

Strengths and Weaknesses

Where there is a realism ontology underlying the research, this often takes the approach of generating propositions, which are then tested with large sample sizes to identify truth determined through consensus between different viewpoints (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Thus, a strength of this approach is the value placed on accepting multiple data sources, enabling generalisations beyond the present sample (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). A weakness of this approach is that it is challenging to reconcile discrepant information, and the ontology does not accommodate for cultural and institutional differences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

3.2.3 Interpretivism

Interpretivism carries an assumption that reality is subjective, socially constructed by individuals and is “the product of its inhabitants” (Blaikie, 2007, p. 131). Researchers working within an interpretivist paradigm use several different approaches and include phenomenologists and social interactionists (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

An approach of this perspective is a social constructionist approach, which suggests that “reality is not so much objective as it is objectified (socially constructed in a way that makes it *seem* objective)” (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, p. 43). In this philosophy, the view is that reality is “socially constructed and given meaning by people” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 58). With this philosophy, there is an appreciation of different constructions and meanings that people place on experiences, and there is an assumption that knowledge exists in the shared meaning created by people (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The research design is typically focused on small sample sizes with qualitative methods using indicative logic (Blaikie, 2007).

Social Constructionist

Social constructionist is an epistemological position within interpretivism. It is an empirical research approach whereby reality is socially constructed and meaning is given by people, rather than a view that reality is objective. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). This approach often focuses on qualitative research where the researcher builds theory through the interpretation of data. A social constructionist “focuses on the ways that people make sense of the world, especially through sharing their experiences with others via the medium of language”. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 58). The role of the researcher is to create knowledge by the sense-making processes of people sharing experiences, and interpreting relationships focused on the use of language (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). With this approach, it is considered that reality is socially constructed and can only be experienced; in other words reality does not have an objective existence external to that of the observer. “Reality is

determined by people rather than by objective and external factors” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008 p. 59). The social constructionist approach focuses on subjective experiences and social processes in which individuals interpret and shape their reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). “The focus should be on what people, individually and collectively, are thinking and feeling, and attention should be paid to the ways they communicate with each other” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 59). A key assumption of this approach is that the way we view the world and knowledge is historically and culturally specific, as well as being dependent upon the current social and economic context (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

A summary of the social constructionist approach is provided in Table 3-3 below.

Table 3-3 Interpretivism, Social Constructionist

Approach		Interpretivism- Social Constructionist
Reality		Reality is socially constructed
Aims of Research		Explore social constructions and interpretations
Researcher		Subjective insider
Research design		Qualitative methods, small sample sizes, inductive logic, theoretical abstraction

Based on Blaikie (2007)

Researchers working within a social constructionist paradigm use small sample sizes focused on researching the way people make sense of the world by sharing experiences with others via language (Berger and Luckman, 1966). A strength of this approach is that it is good for theory generation, understanding processes and meanings, and the data is considered less artificial (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). A weakness of this approach is the large amount of data that is generated, and time required to analysis the data. Analysis and coding of the data (interpretations) can be difficult, and there is an element of subjectivity (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

3.2.4 Summary of main philosophies

In summary, there are various philosophies researchers must consider which influence their research design and methodology. Each has strengths and weaknesses for the researcher to consider. Table 3-4 provides a summary of the methodological implications of the different philosophies identified.

Table 3-4 Summary of main approaches

	Positivism	Relativism	Interpretivist: Constructionist
Aims	Discovery	Exposure	Invention
Starting points	Hypotheses	Propositions	Meanings
Designs	Experiment	Triangulation	Reflexivity
Techniques	Measurement	Survey	Conversation
Analysis/interpretation	Verification/falsification	Probability	Sense-making
Outcomes	Causality	Correlation	Understanding

Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 63

The main approach adopted by the existing sales research is positivism, using experiments to measure survey results and identify causality (Table 3-1). The research of this thesis takes a slightly different approach, epistemological speaking as it is based on a different philosophy, coming from the social constructionist perspective, using reflexivity to analyse interview data to improve understanding of sales leadership.

3.3 The chosen research philosophy: social constructionist

The main philosophy of this research design is social constructionist, which is an interpretivist philosophy (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The domain of sales is based on social interaction and social episodes. It is suggested that instances of these social interactions (sales leadership behaviours) and their role in the cause of outcome (sales performance) can be explored, investigated, and analysed. This study explored how sales leaders and sales people understand and experience sales leadership, and thus perceptions of sales professionals were

gathered. This research focused on the perceptions and experiences of leadership behaviours that enable salesperson performance.

Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) offer a useful summary contrasting the implications of positivism and social constructionist, which supports the decision to use a social constructionist for this research. Specifically, identified in the summary is the importance of incorporating different stakeholder perspectives of both sales leaders and sales representatives, which is met with this approach. In addition, the approach enables the exploration of rich data, which could not be found in surveys, and thus provides a better understanding of the phenomenon.

A comparison of the positivist and social constructionist approach is provided in Table 3-5 below.

Table 3-5 Positivism vs Social Constructionist

	Positivism	Social Constructionist
The observer	must be independent	is part of what is being observed
Human interests	should be irrelevant	are the main drivers of science
Explanations	must demonstrate causality	aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progresses	hypotheses and deductions	aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Concepts	need to be defined so that they can be measured	should incorporate stakeholder perspectives
Unit of analysis	should be reduced to simplest terms	may include the complexity of "whole" situations
Generalization through	statistical probability	theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	large numbers selected randomly	small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 59

In the past, the researcher had used the positivism approach when conducting research on global leadership at the Richard Ivey School of Business. After exploring personal ontological and epistemological perspectives, it was felt that a different approach was required for the PhD research, and this was the reason for selecting a different methodology. The social constructionist philosophical perspective fits with the intention to obtain salespeople's perceptions and thoughts of leadership behaviours, and to create a research design based upon the analysis of rich data of lived experiences. Human interests of the salespeople were the main drivers of this research, supporting the choice of social constructionist versus positivism, whereby the human interest is considered irrelevant.

Further support for this methodological decision relates to the specific context of the research. As discussed, the research explores sales leaders' and sales representatives' perceptions of how leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance in the complex, highly relational software industry sales context. The Social Constructionist approach asserts that people actively construct knowledge, and this approach focuses on understanding lived experiences from the point of view of those who experience it (Ritchie et al., 2014). The core ontological assumption is that reality is socially constructed and given meaning by people, and this leads to an interpretivist epistemological position, which "emphasises the importance of understanding people's perspectives in the context of the conditions and circumstances of their lives" (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 22). Kant who published the Critique of Pure Reason in 1781 suggested that "perception relates not only to the senses but to human interpretations of what the senses tell us. As such knowledge of the world is based on understanding experiences" (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 11), which is found through reflection on an experience rather than the experience itself (Ritchie et al., 2014). As this research focused on how sales professionals construe and experience sales leadership, consequently, in this specific context, the social constructionist approach fits best.

3.3.1 The case for qualitative approach

The purpose of this research is exploratory in nature and is focused on gaining an understanding of leadership behaviours in the sales context and understanding implications of these behaviours. There are objective considerations including behaviours, actions, and sales performance, and there are subjective elements of leadership perceptions and interpretation, creating a dual nature to the research. As well, it could be argued that while some aspects appear objective, they may be based on socially constructed measures, such as sales quotas and relative performance. Based on the evidence presented in the systematic literature review, there are several possible research options that emerged, but scarcity of in-depth qualitative research and the use of this social constructionist approach was revealed.

This research design collected qualitative data in the form of observations and words, rather than statistical numbers (Partington, 2002). The qualitative research approach is often exploratory and enables a researcher to gain perception from the inside, based on actors' understanding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and enables the researcher to see the world from the point of view of the informant (Partington, 2002). Based on the findings of the literature review, an opportunity to gain knowledge from sales leaders and sales representatives in an alternative way to surveys was identified.

The systematic literature review found that 91 per cent of the research on sales leadership published in peer reviewed academic journals (identified in the review), was conducted using a positivist perspective, taking a deductive approach using survey techniques to test theoretical hypotheses. In total, 51 out of 56 empirical studies contained in the literature reviewed, conducted surveys on leadership, and then in some cases, these studies looked at factors of sales performance. This research has provided interesting results; however, this quantitative method of research has limited ability to explain what went on in the "black box"; in other words we don't fully understand how leadership behaviours are perceived to impact sales performance. Although surveys can capture

context and phenomenon, their ability to investigate context is limited (Blaikie, 2007).

It has also been suggested that leadership development needs to consider a more integrative approach to understand the interplay between leaders and followers and the context in which these interactions occur (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Salesperson turnover in specific industries (MacKenzie et al., 2001) and industry stability (Dubinsky et al., 1995) may impact our understanding of leadership in the sales environment. Thus, the context in the sales environment is important to capture when studying leadership from an integrative perspective, furthering the case for a qualitative approach. In addition, qualitative research “can help identify mechanisms, going beyond association, and help show what preceded what through direction observations or retrospection by using stories to help identify connections” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 147), indicating a case for the qualitative approach to explore indicators of the way in which sales leadership behaviours influence salesperson performance.

Qualitative research was chosen to help provide additional insights as the actors’ accounts are important elements and sensitive to social context (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). The research enabled an investigation first-hand of how sales leaders and sales representatives perceive and manage leadership behaviours in relation to salesperson performance within their organisation. In addition, an opportunity existed to explore this research area using a qualitative approach to expand the field, as we cannot know from existing correlational studies how leadership behaviours are associated with increases in salesperson performance and the conditions under which this occurs. As mentioned, previous studies about the role of leadership behaviours in deriving sales performance have produced inconsistent results (Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Some of these studies have tended to challenge one another, and it is not clear what leadership behaviours are best suited for sales. Thus, in this sales context, where previous studies have turned up inconsistent results, there is a strong case for some exploratory qualitative in depth work to explore the

phenomenon in more detail to gain a better understanding of what is going on in sales leadership.

3.4 Research strategy and design

The exploratory nature of this research was inductive in its design to enable theory to emerge from the data. The approach was dependent upon gaining a deeper understanding of leadership behaviours, their impact on sales performance and most importantly how these behaviours are perceived. Although the Bass transformational leadership model (Bass, 1985) provided a theoretical model to guide the approach to exploring leadership behaviours, the development of ideas and constructs flowed from research data with the goal to uncover specific leadership behaviours for this context and an emergent framework. Aspects of the Ladkin Leadership Moment Model (Ladkin, 2010) were also considered during the research design. The Ladkin model proposes that leadership emerges from a collective process which is dependent on context, where people involved take up roles as leader and followers (Ladkin, 2010). This model encouraged the exploration of perceptions from both the sales leaders' and sales representatives' perspectives, a challenge that is addressed by this research.

The study employed qualitative research methods, as this approach allows for the exploration of differing perceptions of salespeople, enabling a greater level of ontological understanding of how the reality of the sales professionals is socially constructed. The research focused on the perceptions of both sales leaders and sales representatives, examining their differing experiences, rather than seeking for reasons to explain their behaviour. Comparing and contrasting their perceptions in this complex business-to-business context has provided rich and interesting data to explore.

3.4.1 Context: the complex sales environment of the IT Company

The research was conducted in a global sales division of a global enterprise software company (IT Company). When researching leadership, context has been highlighted as an important consideration (Ladkin, 2010) and this is

especially true in sales environments. The specific sales environment of the IT Company is interesting because it is characterised by uncertain market conditions and high change due to advances of technology. This is important, as previous researchers have found that transformational leader behaviours are most effective in high change environments (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2010). In addition, previous research by Dubinsky et al. (1995) suggested that the low change environment of their study may explain the surprising results, which indicated that transactional leadership behaviours seemed more suited than transformational leadership in sales. In addition, the systematic literature review highlighted that much of the previous sales research has been conducted in stable, low change environments focused on business to consumer and retail sales (e.g., Arnold et al., 2009; MacKenzie et al., 2001) indicating an opportunity to research in the longer-term high change sales context. Thus, the specific sales environment of the IT Company is interesting and may provide new insights about the impact of longer-term leadership behaviours.

The goal of this research is to extend the application of past research (Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001) into a new context by researching leadership behaviours in a complex sales situation. As well, rather than testing existing leadership models, perceptions of leadership behaviours were explored and identified.

3.4.2 Data collection and instrument design: Semi-structured interviews

The goal is to examine the relationships between emerging themes from qualitative data. The purpose of the research is to strengthen our understanding of sales leadership by examining leadership behaviours from both sales leaders and sales representatives' perspectives. To accomplish this goal, it was determined that the appropriate method for data collection and analysis was the semi-structured interview approach. Semi-structured interviews provide a flexible and structured method of obtaining data and provide a rich set of data for analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews help highlight research topics as "the researcher talks to those who have knowledge of, or experience

with the problem of interest. Through such interviews, researchers explore in detail, the experiences, motives, and opinions of others, and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own” (Rubin and Rubin, 2011, p. 3). The semi-structured interview method was chosen because of the guided open interview approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008) fit with the research philosophy and because this approach is suited to exploratory study.

A qualitative approach, similar to the Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2008) study was used in this research, however, this research was focused on leadership behaviours, rather than sales manager characteristics. Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2008) used value-laddering interviews to uncover effective characteristics of sales managers from two perspectives – that of sales managers and sales representatives. In this present research, semi-structured interviews based on the research protocols presented in Appendix D were used to uncover new ideas about leadership behaviours of sales leaders from two perspectives – that of sales leaders and sales representatives.

Advantages of semi-structured interview research:

Semi-structured interviews are valuable because they allow the respondent to speak freely about their experiences, feelings, and attitudes and the process provides flexibility for the researcher to probe for clarification and elaboration (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Interviews provide the ability to probe and seek additional knowledge, and as a result a deeper understanding of the phenomena of interest may emerge (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate method when seeking to gain understanding about constructs that form the basis of beliefs and opinions (Easterby-Smith, 2008). Semi-structured interviews are used to help researchers see topics from the perspective of the respondent and to understand why they have that perspective. As the focus is on understanding the sales leaders and sales representatives’ perceptions this appeared to be a complementary approach for the research.

Limitations of semi-structured interview research:

Although semi-structured interviews are claimed to be a useful method of gathering information, the complexity involved with semi-structured interviews may be underestimated and it is a very time-consuming process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). It is important to be clear about objectives of the research when preparing for semi-structured interviews to enable the best result. A key challenge is that it is difficult to access the respondent's perceptions and ideas. Limitations of this approach include issues of reliability and validity (Partington, 2002), and the reliance on the memory of the respondents. In addition, large amounts of data make this approach challenging (Partington, 2002). To mitigate these challenges, careful attention was given to the development of the research protocol, and pre-interviews were conducted. In addition, NVivo software was used to manage the large amounts of data gathered in the research.

Why semi-structured interviews?

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a method of data collection for this research, as the approach aligned with the social constructionist philosophical perspective and the research question. Semi-structured interviews are useful when considering constructs that the respondent uses as a basis for opinions and beliefs, such as perceptions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). This interview approach can lead to a deeper understanding of social contexts and provides greater confidentiality than other approaches (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Replies may be considered more personal, and non-verbal cues may be taken into consideration (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Most importantly to this research, semi-structured interviews are flexible to facilitate exploration of the perceptions of sales leadership, both from the followers (sales representatives), as well as leaders (sales leaders). In addition, although the interviews in this research were semi-structured, they were also followed up by probes to explore the perspectives of the interviewee in greater depth. This allowed for flexibility in the process to help uncover additional insights.

This more open semi-structured interviewing approach can enable a better understanding of the construct by gathering different perspectives of the sales

world than a highly-structured interview approach, which would provide more standardised responses (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews provide an effective approach to understand how salespeople perceive and experience sales leadership. This approach provided a strong exploratory step in understanding leadership behaviours in the sales context.

Semi-structured interviewing requires skill and implementation of techniques from the researcher. This researcher's background in sales leadership provided experience conducting customer and sales representative interviews in a variety of settings. The experience helped bring a level of competency to the task, and skills in listening and probing for more information were helpful. During the semi-structured interviews, it is essential that the interviewer refrains from expressing his or her viewpoint, rather encouraging the respondent to share their experiences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). This was a personal challenge for the researcher who found it enjoyable to engage with the interviewee in discussions based on past work experience. By developing a keen awareness of this tendency, it was managed appropriately.

3.4.3 Data analysis

A grounded approach was selected as the research method to analyse the data. This section will introduce the 'grounded theory' methodology, the 'grounded approach' methodology and provide the rationale for the decision to use the 'grounded approach' method.

Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a research strategy that collects and analyses qualitative data through an inductive process to generate theory (Blaikie, 2007). Grounded theory leads to the development of a theory from the data, rather than from existing theories. With this strategy, researchers use a systematic coding process to analyse qualitative data into categories. This enables theory generation by using a systematic approach to qualitative data. "The twin pillars of grounded theory methodology are *constant comparison* and *theoretical sampling*" (Partington, 2002, p. 137). Grounded theory "aims to generate theories that explain social

process or actions through analysis of data from participants who have experienced them” (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 14). The pure “grounded theory” approach by Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggests that a researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind, but rather begins a study with very little prior knowledge, and then allows the theory to emerge from the data (Hunter et al., 2005). The discussion regarding prior knowledge created a split between the founders of grounded theory research. Glaser (1992) strictly defends the importance of avoiding contamination with prior knowledge, whereas Strauss suggests that some researcher knowledge from experience or literature reading before data collection in the field is beneficial to theory development and unavoidable (Heath and Cowley, 2004; Hunter et al., 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It is suggested that when using a pure ‘grounded theory’ method that prior knowledge and preconceptions should be avoided (Partington, 2002).

Grounded approach

The ‘grounded approach’ consists of systematic data collection and analysis to construct theory which is grounded in the data itself (Charmaz, 2006). Some researchers have suggested that it is possible to use a ‘grounded approach’ based on ‘grounded theory’ (Hunter et al., 2005). The ‘grounded approach’ is consistent with and follows ‘grounded theory’, where the aim is to allow emergent themes in the research to shape the development of a theory through a series of coding and reflection stages (Hunter et al., 2005; Spiggle, 1994). However, with the ‘grounded approach’ it has been suggested that the exploration of research with some prior knowledge can work, provided the researcher allows the theory to evolve from the data itself (Hunter et al., 2005). In addition, the ‘grounded approach’ recognises that there is an element of creativity in building theory, which does not fit with a strict systematic approach as prescribed by pure ‘grounded theory’ researchers (Partington, 2002) and may be of value for this research.

Selected method of grounded approach

As the research of this thesis is situated in an emergent area, it seems that conducting exploratory research using the ‘grounded approach’ (Hunter et al.,

2005) is a reasonable choice. This research takes a 'grounded approach' which is ethnographic and guided by the 'grounded theory' method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Although the principles of grounded theory form the basis of the methods used to uncover the emergent theories, key assumptions of the pure 'grounded theory' design are not inherent in this research. In this research a grounded approach is taken where theory is grounded in the sales leaders' and sales representatives' perceptions of leadership behaviours. The 'grounded approach' helped explain what leadership behaviours (actions) enable salesperson performance, based on perceptions (data from semi-structured interviews) from sales professionals who experienced them.

Using the classic 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) would have been difficult, due to the researcher's past knowledge of the IT industry, the sales environment and leadership research. This research recognises the researcher's prior knowledge of the technology sales industry and experience in sales leadership. This experience and prior knowledge was actually helpful in the research process in gaining access to respondents in the IT Company and in the semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, since the research is bringing two separate research areas together, leadership and sales performance, it was felt that the most effective procedure was to conduct a systematic literature review prior to embarking on the research. In taking the 'grounded approach' the method fits closely to the procedures suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) where the data analysis is bound by the preconceived themes under investigation, as identified through the literature review (Charmaz, 2006; Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). It was determined that a 'grounded approach' would be the best fit for this research, to help understand the reality of the sales professionals' perceptions of what leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance.

The 'grounded approach' which consisted of systematic data collection and analysis to construct theory which is grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006) was used. Taking a 'grounded approach' to gather and analyse data from sales professionals, from which ideas were induced, enabled an exploration of the

complexity of the social reality of the sales environment, and is important to remaining consistent to the social constructionist approach. The data analysis approach suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was utilised. A key feature of this approach is the use of hierarchical coding, with themes being explored through several levels of coding. This research did not have a priori hypotheses, and allowed themes to evolve from the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994) which elicited constructs that are defined in the research as sales leadership behaviours. It led theory development based on the data, which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Finally, it enabled categories to emerge from the semi-structured interviews, which may not have emerged if a different approach had been conducted.

Alternative data analysis strategies considered

Alternative data analysis strategies for qualitative research were considered. The template analysis (King, 2004b) was considered as it uses hierarchical coding with subthemes with levels of coding. Template analysis is a group of techniques which are used for the organization and analysis of qualitative data through the development of a hierarchical coding template. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; King, 2004b). While this strategy fits well with a social constructionist approach, it was not selected, as it would have required the development of a single coding template. As the research involved both sales leaders and sales representatives it was important to develop two templates that emerged from the data to compare and contrast findings, rather than code according to one single template.

Another strategy that was considered was content analysis using the critical incident technique (CIT) proposed by Flanagan (1954). CIT uses a method for obtaining direct observations of human behaviours and experiences to solve research problems (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). A critical incident is defined as a unique observable human activity which allows inferences or predictions to be made about the person performing the act (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Flanagan, 1954). In the critical incident, the purpose of the act is clear to the observer, and the incident has an influencing effort on the outcome (Flanagan, 1954). For this research, the critical incident technique was considered as a

method to identify leadership behaviours that contribute to salesperson performance. This technique seemed interesting as it fits well with exploratory research and provided in-depth accounts of events. It was declined, as the focus of the present research was on the entire interview and ideas from the respondents, rather than specific incidences. In addition, it was determined that the focus on specific events detract from the ability to identify more common events and leadership behaviours.

Finally, content analysis was considered as an alternative strategy. Content analysis is an approach where “the researcher interrogates the data for constructs and ideas that have been decided in advance” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 173). This method is considered objective subjective, deductive in approach and aims for clarity when analysing qualitative data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

Due to the inductive nature of the present research, it was determined that following the systematic grounded approach to the data analysis was the best fit with the research design, as it enables the development of a theory, it is faithful to the views of respondents (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), and remains consistent to the social constructionist approach.

3.5 Fieldwork

This section describes the approach to data collection and analysis, including access to the sample, selection of participants. It outlines details of the pilot study and the main study, including methods of data analysis. Reliability and validity are also discussed.

3.5.1 Sampling

This research study utilised purposeful sampling. This type of sampling involves “selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position and analytical framework, your analytical practice, and most importantly the argument or explanation that you are developing” (Mason, 2002, p. 124). There are several strategies for purposeful sampling. The methods selected for this research study were

convenience sampling, sampling contrasting cases, and the stratified purposive sampling approach. The convenience sampling is an approach in which the selection of the sales professionals was made, purely on the basis of who was available and interested in participating in the voluntary study (Ritchie et al., 2014). Sampling contrasting cases is an approach that is used to compare the sales leaders and sales representatives' population groups included in the sample. These population groups have distinct characteristics due to the nature of their positions within the company. The stratified purposive sampling approach (Bryman, 2012) was also used to compare and contrast the fairly homogeneous group of sales representatives by high, medium and average salesperson performance. The determination of these categories is present in Section (3.4.3) Comparing and contrasting the perspectives of the population groups identified support the exploratory component of this research and have enabled insights and findings that are not present in the literature.

Previous qualitative research suggests that theoretical saturation, the phase in qualitative data analysis in which no new data or insights are expected to be found by expanding the sample (Partington, 2002, Ritchie et al., 2014), is reached at a sample size of between 20 and 30 (Akerlind et al., 2005). Other research has suggested interviewing "a minimum of 20 respondents in order to obtain meaningful results" (Deeter-Smith et al., 2008, p. 9). The sample size of 36 sales professionals interviewed in this study well exceeded the recommended sample size, and most importantly enabled theoretical saturation.

3.5.2 Access

The convenience sample was identified after a conference paper by the researcher was presented at the Global Sales and Science Institute academic conference in London, UK. After the presentation, an opportunity emerged to work with a group of sales leaders working at the IT Company who were studying for their Masters programme at Middlesex University, London, UK. As the IT Company is a leading global software organisation, this met the requirement of this research to focus on a complex, business to business organisation operating in uncertain market conditions. In addition, it provided an opportunity to collect

global data from experienced and highly educated sales professionals, based in different subsidiaries across different geographies. Sales leaders were selected based on their interest in the research and their voluntary participation. It was made clear that all semi-structured interviews would be fully confidential, and while the interview could be quoted, respondents would not be identified and that the research would follow Cranfield University's code of conduct. It was also agreed that after the PhD was complete, the findings would be shared with the sales leaders participating in the research.

The Director of the Masters programme organised an introduction for the researcher to the European Sales Enablement Director of the IT Company. The Director of the IT Company in turn introduced the researcher to the cohort of sales leaders participating in the Masters class. During a Masters study week, a presentation was given to the sales leaders outlining details of the research project. The Sales Enablement Director for the IT Company and the Director of the Masters programme fully endorsed the research. After the presentation, an email was sent by the researcher to follow up on the presentation, outlining the purpose of the interview and research plans, copying both the Sales Enablement Director and Director for the Masters programme (Appendix B). This email was sent to encourage the IT Company cohort to participate in the research. When sales leaders responded to the researcher by email, indicating that they were interested in participating in the research, an interview date was confirmed. A reminder email was sent prior to the interview, reiterating the purpose of the interview and confirming scheduling details.

3.5.3 Selection of participants

Primary research data were collected from 36 sales professionals who work at a global IT Company based in subsidiary locations in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Dubai, France, Germany, Ireland, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom through a focused semi-structured interview process. Obtained data were based on sales leaders' perceptions (n=12, 33%) and sales representative's perceptions (n=24, 66%).

A purposive approach to sampling was taken in selecting the data set for this thesis. The core sample frame consisted of delegates of the IT Company sales Masters programme. Sales leaders were to be, or to have been, in sales leadership roles in the sales environment at the research company, with quota carrying sales representatives reporting into them. The initial response of the core purposive sample set of both the pilot and main study was 84%, with 11 out of 13 sales leaders approached agreeing to voluntarily participate. Due to a scheduling issue because of time zone challenges, and due to a job changes, 2 of the original sales leaders were unable to participate, resulting in 9 sales leaders. Then, using a snow ball sampling method, a further 3 sales leaders in the same organisation were added to the sample. 100% of these 3 sales leaders agreed to participate. In total 12 sales leaders participated in the study.

Upon completion of the sales leader interview, each sales leader was reminded of the research plan and asked to approach 3 members of their sales team to voluntarily participate in the research based on the selection criteria. The sales leaders were asked to select one high performing quota carrying sales representative, one average performing quota carrying sales representative, and one low performing quota carrying sales representative on their team to participate in the research, based on sales quota attainment (stack rank). For reasons of commercial confidentiality, the sales leaders were asked to identify the performance criteria because the sales leader had access to this data and was a key informant for appreciating the performance of their sales people. The same briefing was given to all sales leaders.

Due to further career transitions over the multi-year study, in total 8 sales leaders approached 24 sales representatives. One hundred per cent of the sales representatives approached by their sales leaders agreed to voluntarily participate in the research. There was an opportunity to interview more respondents, however, theoretical saturation was reached. Overall a high proportion of those approached who were relevant to this research participated. There were no detectable differences between early and late responders that might indicate a non-responder bias.

When the sales leaders made the selection, they sent the names of the 3 sales representatives by email to the researcher. Then the sales leader sent an introductory email to the sales representatives, individually asking them to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The researcher then followed up with the sales representatives individually to organise the interview. A reminder email was sent reiterating the purpose of the interview and confirming details including date and time of the event. After the semi-structured interviews were completed a follow up email was sent to the sales leaders to obtain the sales representatives performance ranking, based on stack rank. It was helpful to receive this information after the semi-structured interviews were complete to ensure that the performance rank did not unknowingly introduce interview bias. Finally, follow up thank you notes were sent to all respondents for participating in the research and sharing their insights.

3.5.4 Demographic characteristics

The demographic data of this purposive sample is included in the Sample Demographics Table 3-6.

The respondents in the sample all work in the enterprise and cloud software sales divisions at the IT Company. Ninety-five percent of the respondents were male, with 100 percent of the sample possessing a Bachelor or Master degree (55 percent possessing a Master degree). All respondents were over 30 years old. The greatest number of respondents were between the ages of 40-50 (55 percent), with 31 percent between the ages of 30-35, and 14 percent over the age of 50. The greatest number of respondents were based in Europe (50 percent), with 31 percent based in the Commonwealth (UK, Canada and Australia), with 14 percent based in Asia, and 6 percent based in the Middle East. Respondents had significant corporate work experience, with 39 percent having over 21 years, 27 percent between 15 and 20 years, 17 percent between 11 and 15 years, and 17 percent between 5-10 years. The sample is characteristic of sales professionals in the complex software sales environment. The sample is representative of the typical profile of sales professionals in a complex enterprise sales environment.

The descriptive statistics are included below in Table 3-6. To ensure confidentiality and assume the anonymity of the respondents, the geographies have been consolidated into regions in this presentation and specific departments within the IT Company have not been identified.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3-6 Descriptive statistics

Case Profiles	Region	Educational Level Attained	Gender	Participant Age	Participant Type	Percent Time Selling in Current Role	Sales Rep Performance	Year of Experience in Sales	Years of Experience at IT Company	Years of Experience in Sales Leadership	Years of Work Experience
Participant 1 SL P	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	41	Sales Leader	5%	Not Applicable	17	10	10	15-20
Participant 2 SL P	Asia Pacific	Masters Degree	Male	50	Sales Leader	30%	Not Applicable	24	16	16	21 +
Participant 3 SR P	Asia Pacific	Masters Degree	Male	43	Sales Rep	70 %	High Performing	5	2	3	15-20
Participant 4 SR P	The Commonwealth	Bachelor Degree	Male	40	Sales Rep	60%	Average Performing	13	9	0	15-20
Participant 5 SL P	Europe	Bachelor Degree	Male	52	Sales Leader	60%	Not Applicable	20	6	4	21 +
Participant 6 SR P	Europe	Bachelor Degree	Male	40	Sales Rep	60%	Low Performing	13	3	0	11-15
Participant 7 SR P	The Commonwealth	Masters Degree	Male	35	Sales Rep	60%	Low Performing	10	6	0	11-15
Participant 8 SR P	Europe	Bachelor Degree	Male	31	Sales Rep	80 %	Average Performing	9	3	0	5-10
Participant 9 SR P	Europe	Bachelor Degree	Male	33	Sales Rep	90%	High Performing	6	4	0	11-15
Participant 10 SL M	The Commonwealth	Bachelor Degree	Female	56	Sales Leader	60%	Not Applicable	23	12	3	21 +
Participant 11 SL M	The Commonwealth	Masters Degree	Male	48	Sales Leader	60%	Not Applicable	25	15	20	21 +
Participant 12 SL M	Asia Pacific	Masters Degree	Male	46	Sales Leader	5%	Not Applicable	20	5	13	21 +
Participant 13 SL M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	46	Sales Leader	10%	Not Applicable	15	10	7	21 +
Participant 14 SL M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	52	Sales Leader	30%	Not Applicable	27	17	9	21 +
Participant 15 SL M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	37	Sales Leader	70%	Not Applicable	15	8	5	15-20
Participant 16 SL M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	40	Sales Leader	30%	Not Applicable	16	6	4	15-20

Case Profiles	Region	Educational Level Attained	Gender	Participant Age	Participant Type	Percent Time Selling in Current Role	Sales Rep Performance	Year of Experience in Sales	Years of Experience at IT Company	Years of Experience in Sales Leadership	Years of Work Experience
Participant 17 SL M	The Commonwealth	Masters Degree	Male	33	Sales Leader	10%	Not Applicable	8	8	4	5-10
Participant 18 SR M	Asia Pacific	Masters Degree	Male	45	Sales Rep	20%	Low Performing	10	8	5	15-20
Participant 19 SL M	Asia Pacific	Masters Degree	Male	48	Sales Leader	50%	Not Applicable	24	8	12	21 +
Participant 20 SR M	Middle East	Bachelor Degree	Male	43	Sales Rep	70%	Average Performing	17	8	0	15-20
Participant 21 SR M	Middle East	Bachelor Degree	Male	47	Sales Rep	60%	High Performing	20	10	0	21 +
Participant 22 SR M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	42	Sales Rep	75%	High Performing	13	13	0	15-20
Participant 23 SR M	The Commonwealth	Bachelor Degree	Male	49	Sales Rep	75%	High Performing	30	12	0	21 +
Participant 24 SR M	The Commonwealth	Bachelor Degree	Male	49	Sales Rep	80 %	Low Performing	18	1	0	21 +
Participant 25 SR M	The Commonwealth	Bachelor Degree	Male	44	Sales Rep	70 %	Average Performing	18	4	5	15-20
Participant 26 SR M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	43	Sales Rep	90%	Low Performing	1	1	0	15-20
Participant 27 SR M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	30	Sales Rep	60%	Average Performing	2	2	0	11-15
Participant 28 SR M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	41	Sales Rep	70 %	Average Performing	17	10	0	15-20
Participant 29 SR M	Europe	Bachelor Degree	Male	31	Sales Rep	90%	High Performing	8	3	0	5-10
Participant 30 SR M	Europe	Masters Degree	Male	33	Sales Rep	60%	Low Performing	6	2	0	5-10
Participant 31 SR M	Europe	Masters Degree	Female	42	Sales Rep	90%	High Performing	9	16	5	21 +
Participant 32 SR M	Europe	Bachelor Degree	Male	47	Sales Rep	60%	Low Performing	6	8	0	21 +
Participant 33 SR M	Europe	Bachelor Degree	Male	50	Sales Rep	60%	Average Performing	17	8	0	21 +
Participant 34 SR M	The Commonwealth	Bachelor Degree	Male	33	Sales Rep	70 %	Average Performing	11	2	0	11-15
Participant 35 SR M	The Commonwealth	Masters Degree	Male	32	Sales Rep	70%	Low Performing	7	4	0	5-10
Participant 36 SR M	The Commonwealth	Bachelor Degree	Male	34	Sales Rep	50%	High Performing	9	4	0	5-10

3.5.5 Data collection

This section will describe details of the interview process and protocol. A review of the pilot study and main study will be discussed.

As outlined in the research strategy, semi-structured interviews were selected as the method for data collection. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 50 to 110 minutes, and they were recorded after informed consent and permission was provided by the participants, enabling the collection of over 47 hours of interview recording. This was done after participants were guaranteed confidentiality. The interview protocols contain questions that tapped into the following broad themes: 1) respondents were asked about their understanding of salesperson performance and leadership behaviours, which is important to understand individual meanings and interpretations around the research topic to help explain social reality and 2) the semi-structured interviews explored each sales leader's and sales representative's perceptions of leadership behaviours that led to exceptional salesperson performance and poor salesperson performance. Probes were used to encourage the respondent to discuss why, and explore their views on what leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance. Throughout the semi-structured interviews, summary checks were conducted to ensure that the researcher was not just interpreting, and received the message correctly. Respondents were also prompted to provide additional contextual data on the modern sales environment to help explain why new leadership behaviours in sales are required. In the semi-structured interviews, subjective accounts and examples of leadership behaviours perceived by sales leaders and sales representatives to enable sales performance were gathered. These accounts of lived experiences would help identify evidence of leadership behaviours, which enable salesperson performance with an integrated perspective of both the leader and the follower in the sales environment.

3.5.6 Pilot study

The pilot study research was exploratory and a qualitative methodology was used to better understand how the sales leadership social world is interpreted,

understood, and experienced. A review of the literature indicated that there was an opportunity to gain knowledge from sales professionals in an alternative way to surveys. For the pilot study, it was important that the interview questions would yield appropriate data, which would contribute to the field of sales leadership. The interview questions were derived from the research question and discussions with the researcher's supervisor and members of PhD review panel. Two pre-pilot semi-structured interviews were conducted with one sales leader and one sales representative outside the research company, to ensure that the questions were appropriate, grounded in practice and would yield relevant information. The pre-pilot semi-structured interviews were not included in the analysis, as the respondents were chosen for convenience, and while they were conducted in the IT industry they were not conducted at the research company. After the pre-pilot semi-structured interviews were complete a review of the interview protocol occurred, and the audio tape was reviewed to help identify areas of skill development for interviewing. There were two areas of development identified for both the protocol and the interview skills. The initial pre-pilot interview protocol had a more balanced approach of identifying salesperson performance and leadership behaviours. While it was important to encourage respondents to define salesperson performance, the protocol was revised to address the research question more effectively. Thus, the interview protocol was refined to spend more of the interview time focused on exploring leadership behaviours, rather than salesperson performance. This also led to the creation of two separate protocols for both sales leaders and sales representatives. In addition, ideas about improving interviewing style emerged, including the need to encourage and probe respondents to elaborate on new ideas. This was addressed in future semi-structured interviews.

After the pre-pilot semi-structured interviews were conducted, the research moved forward to the pilot study. The pilot study consisted of 9 semi-structured interviews of sales professionals at the IT Company. There were 3 sales leaders and 6 sales representatives in the pilot study sample. One of the sales leaders who had previously managed a sales team was in a different division of sales, and did not have sales representatives on his team who qualified to participate in

the research. The pilot semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents at the IT Company at the end of 2014. They were conducted to gain knowledge, test the methodology and prepare for the second-year PhD Review.

The pilot study semi-structured interviews provided exceptional insights and ideas into the research study. The semi-structured interviews were conducted using a software tool called Adobe Connect to enable audio and video communication capabilities. The software was compatible with the IT Company's internal processes and ensured confidentiality. The tool was used to conduct the interview and record it as a back-up measure. An audio recording device owned by the researcher was used for the semi-structured interviews as the primary method of recording. It was helpful to have the back-up measure, as during the pilot study with one interview the Adobe Connect technology did not work correctly. The audio back-up was used to capture the data. In addition, having the ability to refer to the Adobe Connect back-up was helpful when considering nonverbal cues.

Finally, in the pilot study it was found that the data emerging were rich and relevant. Given the perception from a sales leader that "sales leadership is an art and not a science" (Respondent 13), it became clear that following the interview path was correct, and confirmed that the semi-structured interviews provided the ability to explore ideas and insights more effectively than using a survey method.

3.5.7 Main study

The main study of the research was conducted at the same global IT Company as the pilot study and consisted of 27 semi-structured interviews of sales professionals. There were 9 sales leaders and 18 sales representatives in the main study sample. These semi-structured interviews were conducted throughout late 2015 and early 2016. As in the pilot study, the semi-structured interviews were scheduled with sales leaders who had managed or were currently managing quota carrying sales professionals.

Building on results of the pilot study, an iterative grounded approach was used to slightly modify the data collection instrument and the interview protocol. It is important to refine the interview questions until we are convinced with the validity of the set of questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). There were only minor changes to the main protocol and the protocols are very similar. A final question was added for respondents to summarise the top five leadership behaviours that were perceived to enable salesperson performance. This question was helpful as it elicited a prioritisation of ideas previously stated, and provided an opportunity to probe for any additional leadership behaviours that may have been missed. Changes to the research protocol are illustrated in Appendix C.

After the pilot study, it was also decided to increase the number of respondents in the main study to gain greater clarity on some variables in the research. The unit of analysis was confirmed to be the sales leader. In addition, a glossary of terms was created (Appendix A). A comparative analysis of coding structures between sales leaders and sales representatives, and between sales representatives of different levels of performance was produced, which provided interesting insights that will be discussed in the findings chapter.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the Adobe Connect software once again, as required by the IT Company. This enabled back-up audio and video tape of the semi-structured interviews and enhanced security. There were 5 semi-structured interviews where the respondents connected to the call on audio conference calls, rather than Adobe Connect. During one of these calls the audio recording device ran out of battery and half the data of the interview were lost. The respondent was contacted immediately and asked if that portion of the interview could be redone. The respondent agreed and then spent an additional 50 minutes (total interview time 1 hour 50 min) answering questions from their home office. This provides an example of the interest and commitment identified throughout the process from respondents when discussing sales leadership.

The pilot and main study semi-structured interviews were combined for the final data in this research project, providing a total sample size of 36 (12 sales leaders, 24 sales representatives). This was possible because although the research protocol changed slightly, the final protocols were virtually identical and the changes were inconsequential to the results. As discussed, there was only one additional question added to the main study protocol to encourage the respondents to summarise and reiterate, and small textual changes were made to improve the interviewing convention (See Appendix C). Based on these considerations it was determined that the data was best presented in a combined state of the pilot and main study.

3.6 Analysis

3.6.1 Transcription and use of NVivo software

After the semi-structured interviews were conducted they were transcribed verbatim, and demographic information was captured. To ensure data accuracy, every minute of the audio versions of each interview were cross checked with the transcripts. This work helped enable familiarisation with the data, provided opportunities to capture ideas for future coding and enabled the development of insights, which were recorded in a research journal. This information was uploaded into a software tool called NVivo. This tool is being used to organise data, and help with the analysis and interpretation of the data (Bazeley and Richards, 2000). It provides transparency, and produces an audit trail of the data to support the evidence found in the study.

3.6.2 Data coding

Coding is a key stage of qualitative data analysis where the researcher sorts and organises data into categories, making it meaningful from frameworks or groups of ideas (Lofland et al., 2006). It represents the process of asking questions about the data, and interpreting the data. This process allows for a thematic analysis and the eventual development of a coding template (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

In the initial round of open coding for the pilot study, the first two transcripts were read (one from a sales leader and one from a sales representative) to gain an

understanding of the message and identify any text that had relevance to the research question. These transcripts were read through without coding, instead highlighting possible areas of interest. When reading the transcription of the interview, any leadership behaviours that may help provide a preliminary set, sales leader behaviours that were perceived to enable sales performance were noted. Then the process of highlighting the data occurred. Putting aside a research bias of grouping responses into specific transformational and transactional leadership behaviour categories, the researcher instead began with a system of non-content specific codes through a process of inductive reasoning known as coding units into broad categories (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to create a “start list” (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of the pilot study and then followed the same process for the main study. This consisted of respondent-driven open coding of the semi-structured interviews into initial non-hierarchical codes. For example, the statement “the sales manager should be able to facilitate and come up with different plans of attack for the deal that may not have been considered by the sales person” was put into the broad category of sales leadership behaviours that enable sales performance (versus sales leadership behaviours that hinder sales performance). During this phase, data were organised into codes relating to the research question. The codes were quite numerous, and varied. Some key statements from the transcript were included in numerous codes through the technique of parallel coding. Hierarchical coding was emphasised using broad initial themes, including leadership behaviours and sales performance.

The next stage of data analysis was the categorisation of the “start list” into the “data display list” (Miles and Huberman, 1994) based on related themes, and the organisation into a framework to further the analysis of the data. These nodes were then broken down into narrower more specific codes, such as coaching, and then further refined to coaching the sales deal. For example, the statement identified above was also coded into the customer engagement, and coaching leadership behaviours categories. This coding was completed using NVivo software to organise the data into nodes which represented themes.

As this research programme was exploratory, leadership behaviours, consequences, and any new ideas that emerged were analysed. Pre-defined leadership behaviours for the pilot programme were considered during the secondary coding phase, and these included the core transformation leadership behaviours of individual consideration (coaching), intellectual stimulation (stimulating), inspiration (inspiring), and idealised influence (visioning) (Bass 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006). As well, based on Authentic Leadership Theory, elements of psychological capital (optimism, hope, self-efficacy and resilience) were considered during the secondary coding phase. In addition, perceptions of both the leader (sales leader) and the follower (sales representative) occurred. The data identified from the sales leaders and sales representatives were compared and contrasted to understand both perceptions and implications. The development of a theme list and conceptual sales leadership behaviour framework began to emerge from the data using an iterative process.

Table ApxD-1 provides a sample of the start list template where 133 open codes were developed for the sales leaders. Table ApxD-2 provides a sample of the start list template where 135 open codes were developed for the sales representatives. Table ApxD-3 provides a sample of the data display results based on related themes and categories for sales leaders, and Table ApxD-4 provides a sample of data display results for sales representatives. Screen shots have been attached to provide transparency of the data analysis process (Appendix D-7).

3.6.3 Cycle of analysis

The data analysis process has helped identify meaningful constructs of effective leader behaviours and the modern sales context. One of the challenges to break free of in terms of coding was the realisation that while primarily coding for leadership behaviours, the data was providing a lot more information than behaviours. As a result, some side notes around contextual things were made, especially to those that suggest that there are changes to the complex modern sales environment. This was done to help connect the changes in the context to changes required in leadership. This may help demonstrate why there is a need

for new leadership insights in the complex sales environment, and may help explain the importance of this contribution to knowledge in the modern sales environment. Analytical memos were written to help draw conclusions about the relationship between the interpretation of the texts, the relationship between leadership behaviours and sales performance, as represented in the interviewee transcripts (Appendix F4). This data enabled the development of a theme list. The table below provides details the cycle of analysis, which was used to conduct during the analysis of the research data. The coding of this research study has been completed following the guidelines set out by the grounded approach.

Table 3-7 Cycle of analysis

Coding Process	Analysis Process
Transcription	Semi-structured interviews were transcribed, field notes, and observations, as well as profiled demographic information were captured and uploaded into NVivo.
Start List	Broad participant driven open coding of the semi-structured interviews occurred into initial non-hierarchical codes to help identify the data into initial general themes. (Appendix D1&D2)
Data Display	Codes were categorised by re-ordering themes identified and coded in the “start list” into categories of various themes identified. Related themes were grouped and organised into a framework to further the analysis of the data. (Appendix D3&D4). This was completed by using outputs from the NVivo software, and various brainstorming analysis sessions.
Data Reduction	Categories were mapped to broader themes of leadership behaviours which enable salesperson performance and potential mediators. (Appendix D4&D5).
Analytical Memos	Memos were written against the higher-level codes to summarise the content of the various categories and propose findings. These memos stated what was said, and the coding frequencies. Patterns pertaining to sales leaders, sales representatives, and by performance, and the literature was noted to create writing to represent the respondents and put their findings in context with the literature (see Appendix D7).

Validation	This stage involved testing the analytical memos to self-audit findings. Evidence in the data was sought to support the findings.
Synthesis	The final stage was the synthesising of the analytical memos into the thesis findings and the writing of the discussion chapter which was the final phase of the analysis.

(Based on Miles and Huberman, 1994)

3.7 Data Validity and Reliability

3.7.1 Qualitative assessment: interrater reliability and key learnings

To ensure data validity and reliability, specific steps were taken. The coding of specific behaviours is not always clear cut, as the research follows an interpretative approach. However, as prescribed by the panel, the focus of inquiry remained grounded in the data and results have been data led. As the research is addressing the behaviours of sales leaders, attention was given to data that may have appeared to belong to a different category. Effort was taken to clarify whether the codes were tasks/activities, sales behaviours or leadership behaviours. As discussed, a glossary of terms was developed to help define these terms more clearly (Appendix A). Overall, the coding process helped provide richer and more descriptive labels for the data, and enabled visualisation of the data in new ways.

Qualitative Assessments and Interrater Reliability were performed at the beginning of the data analysis of the main study to enhance coding confidence. A leading academic in leadership, blind coded 2 sales leader transcripts and we compared results. We found a commonality in the context of the text and behaviours identified; however, there was a difference in coding style that had to do with the amount of text coded. The professor was a quantitative researcher whose style of coding was more short and crisp, and his coding was purely concerned with the behaviour piece because of academic interests. In terms of the behaviours that were identified, the inter-coder reliability testing for the semi-structured interviews, using a Cohen's Kappa Coefficient score to measure the degree of agreement between coders was recorded at 0.75 from the interrater

reliability test (Appendix D.8), which meets substantial interrater agreement reliability standards (Cohen, 1968). The reasonably high pass agreement increased confidence in the coding and reliability and validity of the findings.

The process of an interrater reliability check enabled an interesting discussion to gain a greater understanding of the constructs coded in the data. There was a long session of inter-coder discussion, lasting for several hours and exploring the different constructs. Where differences of view existed, they were discussed and resolved. This experience provided an opportunity to reflect on coding practices. It helped the researcher realise the preference is to code larger chunks of data to reflect the context and richness of the data. As a result, of the inter-coder exercise and subsequent discussion, during the coding of the main study the researcher was more selective, and constantly had in mind to code more crisply and accurately than in the pilot study, while still maintaining the richness of the data. As this interrater reliability check was performed on the first transcripts coded for the main study, the researcher could transfer these learnings to the coding process for the remainder of the study, and this transfer of knowledge provided a positive impact.

3.7.2 Ethical considerations

This research followed Cranfield's ethical standards. Informed Consent was provided by every participant in the research process. Emails were presented to each participant, asking them if they would voluntarily participate in the process (Appendix B). All the respondents were aware that the semi-structured interviews would be transcribed and quotations would be used in this PhD thesis. In addition, strict confidentiality was adhered to throughout the process. In some cases, the sales leaders asked for feedback from the researcher about their sales team. However, this information was not provided to the sales leaders. There was a strict focus to keep the sales representatives' feedback confidential, and incorporate into the findings, rather than provide feedback for specific teams. In addition, the company name was not disclosed, individuals were disguised, and any names identified in the transcripts were altered to protect confidentiality.

3.8 Chapter summary – The Research Paradigm

A summary of the Research Paradigm that was used for this study is included below.

Table 3-8 Research paradigm

Assumptions	Research Paradigm
Ontology	Social Constructionist suggesting that reality is socially constructed and given meaning by sales professionals (Richie et al. 2014)
Epistemology	Interpretivist to gain knowledge based on perceptions and lived experiences of sales leaders and sales representatives identified in transcribed data, with theory developing directly from the data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), and to understand sales professionals' "perspectives in the context of the condition and circumstances of their lives" (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 22).
Methodology	Grounded Approach to developing 'emergent' theories of social action through the identification of analytical categories from the data and the relationships between them (Ritchie et al., 2014)
Methods	Inductive analysis using a Grounded Approach (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Semi-structured interviews within a Global Information Technology sales organisation in the enterprise software sales context.

In summary, the methodology of the research was led by the social constructionist philosophy, with a grounded approach to conducting inductive analysis. The next two chapters (4 & 5) outline the findings of this research study. Chapter 6 provides a discussion and will summarise the research and results.

4 FINDINGS - PART 1

4.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this thesis is to examine perceptions of what leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance from the perspectives of sales leaders and sales representatives. The main research question is:

What sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance?

The purpose in this chapter is to discuss the findings of a study conducted with 36 sales professionals from one global enterprise software organisation, as described in Chapter 3. For the final analysis, the data from the pilot study and the main study were combined. Data will be presented with participants/respondents described as 'R #'. Either SL for sales leaders, and SR for sales representatives will be included in the description. As well, sales representatives will be identified as high performing (HP), average performing (AP) or low performing (LP). In Section 4.2 the context of the modern sales environment will be presented. In Section 4.3 the results from all participants will be presented and perceptions of leadership behaviours perceived to enhance salesperson performance will be introduced. In Section 4.4 results associated with the specific leadership behaviours will be presented. In Section 4.5 results associated with potential mediators will be presented. In Section 4.6 a sales leadership behaviour framework is proposed to account for the data. The chapter is summarised in Section 4.7.

4.2 The context of the modern complex sales environment

Due to changes in the modern complex sales environment, new leadership behaviours are perceived to be required to enhance salesperson performance based on the data.

Sales leaders and sales representatives identified the theme of pressure in the modern sales environment and how it impacts sales leadership was prevalent throughout the research. The pressure seems to be coming from the new

dynamic complex sales environment with its quarterly driven revenue focus, and an accelerated rate of change. Respondents described the “IT Company” sales environment as a transactional culture, which has driven transactional leadership, even though they are working in a longer-term business-to-business environment. An unrelenting focus and the pressure to achieve sales revenue was discussed consistently by both sales leaders and sales representatives. An example of this is found in the quotes below provided by two sales leaders:

“We are so much into this transactional culture and the pressure is so high on numbers on a quarter basis that neither the sales guys or the sales manager have the time to reflect, and because there is no time to reflect we are just not learning the lessons whether the good or the bad”.....“From the first day of the quarter to the last one they are running ... with no time to reflect...Time is the big killer in terms of leadership style. We are too much time under pressure. At the end of the quarter, the 6 weeks within the quarter, all the nice speech about leadership and coaching and all these things simply disappear and at “IT Company” you move back to fight and fire. Unless you achieve your numbers the financial markets will shout. So the priorities are shifted to the transactional model again”. R1 SL

“I don’t want to sound too critical of previous leaders, but you know they only talked about numbers, they only cared about numbers and the long-term sustainability of the business was something like, I don’t get fired if I make my numbers.... My global sales manager, he only cares about the numbers”. R2 SL

Overall, the frustration of all the sales professionals with the pressure and transactional leadership culture at “IT Company” was apparent. This was suggested to negatively impact leadership and effective organisation processes. One sales leader’s quotation highlights this concept below.

“I say to my manger look, we are having a problem with the delivery organisation or this organisation or this other silo within “IT Company”. He just says you know I’ll get to it, another dodge because he just cares about

making number...the laser focus on achieving the number, push, push, push, yeah, I get it...don't get distracted sales, it is fair enough, BUT there are things (processes) which, as I said, will undermine the long-term sustainability of the business unless that they are fixed, but we are forever working around these issues". R2 SL

Additionally, there is pressure on the sales team due to the demands of the new sales environment, where the customer has high access to information from advances in the Internet and technology explosion. The following quotations describe how this pressure of the new sales environment impacts the sales team.

"These days you have got to know three times as much (as the customer) because you don't know what they know and information is freely available. So, that inside connection is absolutely critical these days, because the insight not only to the situation but also insight into business itself is necessary". R4 SR (AP)

The idea of creating more time for reflection, and less pressure, was presented by several of the respondents. A sales leader summarises the thoughts on this in the following quotation:

"I would expect from a great leader to create that space for his team, for his team to be able to step back reflect and look at what might be improved...that would be in today's environment one of the most critical aspects of a great leader". R1 SL

Overall the respondents identified that the modern sales environment had changed significantly and, thus, requires new leadership behaviours to enable salesperson performance.

4.3 Main findings

Interview data from each respondent were coded and classified into different categories of leadership behaviours. This study challenges existing research by identifying leadership behaviours that appear to be specific to the complex sales environment. The study also supports existing research by confirming the importance of some transformational and transactional leadership behaviours. Analysis of the respondent references (Table 4-1) led to the identification of leadership behaviours, which are perceived to enhance salesperson performance, including: 'coaching', 'collaborating', 'customer engaging', 'championing', 'challenging' and 'creating vision'. As well, the sales leaders identified 'candidate recruiting' as a sales leader behaviour that enables salesperson performance. Some references were made to another leader behaviour found in the transformational leadership literature, 'inspiring', however, this was less frequently emphasised. References were also made to the transactional leadership behaviour of 'rewarding'. However, for both sales leaders and sales representatives, these were referred to with the least frequency, demonstrating a pattern of responses that indicate this behaviour may be perceived to have less influence on enabling salesperson performance than the other leadership behaviours identified. These behaviours will be introduced, defined, and discussed in the following sub sections. In Table 4-1 the number of references made to each behaviour by total respondents is presented. Figure 4-1 provides a visual display of the references results.

Table 4-1 Total references to sales leadership behaviours

Sales Leadership Behaviours	References - (N=1908 references, n=36 respondents)
Coaching	630
Collaborating	387
Championing	319
Customer Engaging	230
Challenging	98
Creating Vision	91
Candidate Recruiting	59
Inspiring	55
Rewarding	39

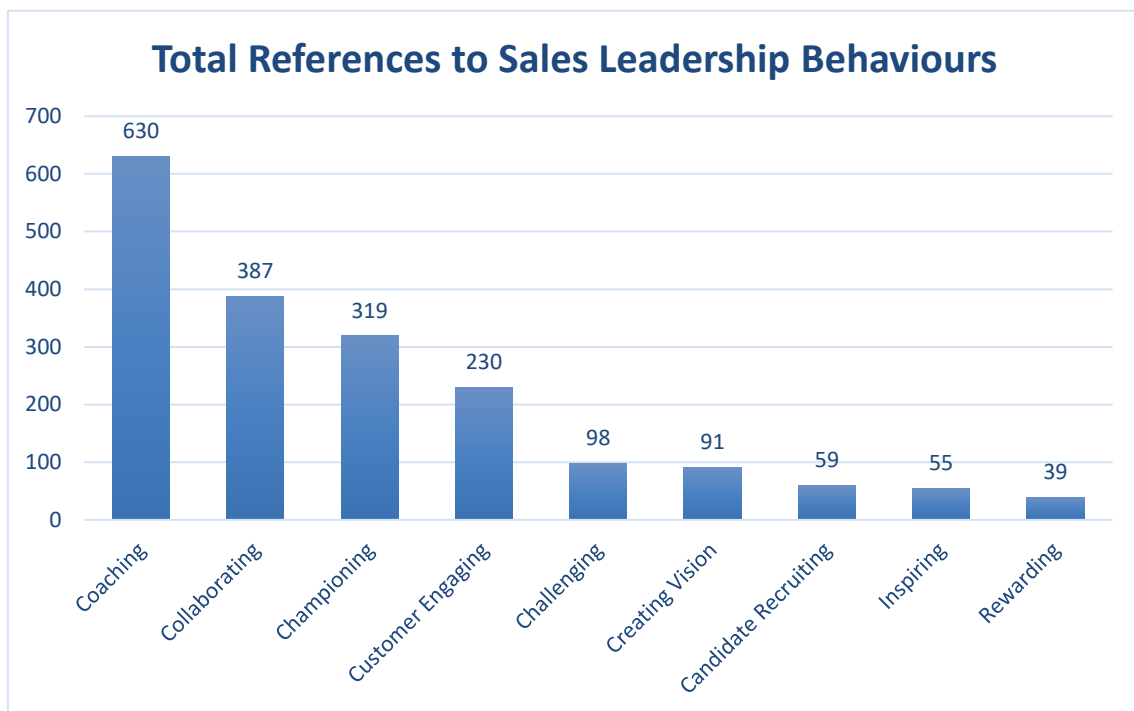


Figure 4-1 Total references to sales leadership behaviours

4.4 Leadership behaviours

4.4.1 Coaching

The transformational leadership behaviour of ‘individualised consideration’ (Bass, 1985), also referred to as ‘coaching’, was the most frequently referenced leadership behaviour perceived to enhance salesperson performance. The sample of 36 respondents made 630 references to this behaviour. Respondents indicated that sales leaders should be attentive and listen to the sales representatives, and make efforts to understand individuals. They suggested that leaders should provide support and encouragement, coach and advise, and provide feedback in ways that sales representative can accept, understand and use for individual development. Also, they indicated that sales leaders should coach for development within the business, identify new opportunities for growth and learning, and provide information as needed. There were many ideas that emerged in the coaching leadership category, indicating that this is a complex construct. Overwhelmingly, the results suggested that it is perceived that sales leaders can enable salesperson performance by using coaching (Table 4-1).

The sales professionals seemed to construct their own meanings of the importance of coaching as a leadership behaviour to enable salesperson performance. The following quotations demonstrate the importance the sales professionals identified with coaching:

“The most important role for a sales leader to enable sales performance, I think, in my opinion, is get the coaching right first”. R13 SL

“I believe they should use a coaching attitude – a coaching attitude is the ability to ask questions and help the person find their own way, and apply their own change theories – it is more powerful than only telling or mentoring the sales guys. Now and again this is balanced by the fact that we are under quarterly pressure...a coaching attitude is a 4th dimension that I would expect from a great leader in sales.” R1 SL

“Coaching I think is the next evolution (in sales leadership)” R36 SR (HP)

The sales professionals also defined what was included in this construct. This was done numerous times in the semi-structured interviews. Examples of quotations defining the coaching constructs are as follows:

“Coaching – It’s confidence, it’s trust, we have your back, we’re helping you to improve, we’re helping you to develop”. R17 SL

“The hard learning is in the field, your core job, and the soft stuff is the guidance and how we tailor that to ensure that you get the best advice possible to help you do your job better” R21 SR (HP)

“What I really appreciate is someone who can bring a different perspective, and can get me a different way to see things, or can teach me a different way to approach situation. They can deliver this experience to me in a way that is going to make think, rather than just give a recipe for success”. R12 SL

In the semi-structured interviews, the sales professionals spoke about how coaching impacts salesperson performance. These quotations help provide an interesting illustration of the potential links of leadership behaviour to salesperson performance.

“I think that (coaching) makes a good manager because they are showing interest in you as an individual, you as the person doing that role, and what your abilities are like beyond what you are currently doing. And again, that gives you more confidence in what you could be doing, as well as to what you actually are doing... helping enable sales performance”. R9 SR (HP)

“As a leader, you can manage actions; you can’t manage results.... It comes back to coaching... the actions that are necessary and then putting the discipline around making sure that they (the actions) are actually done”. R2 SL

“I would say 60 percent of the time, sales people operate in their comfort zone. As you start to measure activity and you measure the outputs, what

you find is they are seeing 80 percent of the same people over and over again....and what happens with that, is that as sales people build pipelines, and as they build revenue from that pipeline and they get caught up in 1, 2, or 3 deals, and the work on the rest of the territory that they're managing had to stop... And if you don't catch that earlier enough in the year, or earlier enough for the cycle (and coach on that), then that has problems for your long-term success, and typically you get someone who is successful after one or two years, but they cannot sustain that success in three, four or five years". R11 SL

Based on the data, the coaching leadership behaviour is important. Now that the importance of this behaviour has been outlined, the behaviour has been defined and the link to performance has been identified, sub themes of coaching identified by the respondents will now be outlined.

Sub themes of Coaching in Sales

Within the coaching leader behaviour category, several sub-themes were identified. Firstly, individualised coaching was identified, with focus on developmental coaching to provide opportunities for growth and learning. Secondly, coaching the sales process was identified, using both the art of sales: coaching customer opportunities, and the science of sales: using metrics as a vehicle for coaching. Across the semi-structured interviews, an overall theme regarding the importance of using coaching to build trust was identified. Challenges regarding the implementation of coaching were discussed. This data will be discussed further in the upcoming section.

4.4.1.1 Individualised Coaching

In the semi-structured interviews, respondents identified the need for personal coaching, individualised to each sales representative. This was the most referenced sub-theme in the coaching leadership behaviour across both the sales representatives and sales leaders. It is important to note that individualised coaching was called out as a requirement, separate to coaching the sales

process by both leaders and representatives, with great emphasis and discussion. Coaching, tailored to the sales representative was described as consisting of advice and feedback that could be used for personal development. It is an approach which was described as giving personal attention to the sales representatives. An approach in which the leader would make the individual feel valued for their contributions, and coach and advise them on items important to them as individuals. One interesting coding node that was identified, was the importance of understanding the individual sales person. The sales professionals spoke about the importance of listening actively when coaching, and not telling. They spoke about using individualised coaching as an avenue to build trust with sales representatives, and suggested that coaching questions be proposed to ask what the sales representatives want to be coached on to encourage self-coaching to occur. They identified in these coaching sessions that sales representatives should bring their own individual perceptions and ideas to the coaching session. Individualised developmental coaching (career coaching) was also discussed with emphasis. A quotation from a high-performing sales representative provides evidence of importance of individualised coaching.

“there are lots of leaders, and there are lots of good leaders, but there’s only a few exceptional leaders and I think those leaders are the people that can morph themselves into different situations, recognise different types of people and recognise the sorts of things that motivate those different types of people”. R21 SR (HP)

Respondents discussed, how regular coaching sessions are helpful to achieving improved sales results and performance. The sales professionals suggested that leaders who coached to get people to think differently, using an empathetic approach and asking coaching questions, were perceived to enable salesperson performance. They also discussed the importance of working with leaders who coached to help jointly solve problems, to help enable sales performance. The following quotations illustrate elements of this sub-theme.

“In summary, a great leader would be somebody who takes the time to understand where these sales people are at, not just the accounts level but understanding... What are they missing? Where are they at? Where are they experiencing difficulties?” “This is all about people interaction. Who do you sell to, when you are selling? You are selling to a person, you are not selling to an organisation. It's extremely important that we look at it (coaching) from that perspective as well. So, you have to enable and give ammunition to your sales people, not just in the form of self-flattery and technical things, but also from an emotional capital perspective” R3 SR (HP)

“showing an actual interest in your people, showing an actual interest and understanding an underlying situation on what's going on behind the lines I would say that is, that would be an empathetic perspective... and that can help enable sales performance”. R23 SR (HP)

One sales leader spoke about the importance of understanding the sales representative and working with that person, rather than just telling them what to do. This leader discussed how sales leaders often share the way they have been successful on their sales journey, and tell the sales representative what to do based on their experience, rather than helping the sales representative identify how they can be individually successful on their own journey using their own talents. He stressed the importance of this need for individualised coaching in the quotation below.

“So If the sales leader is going to say I have been doing that for 20 years, I'm super successful and I want to tell you what you need to do, okay fine maybe that will work, OR maybe it does not fit with my (sales representative's) personality, or it doesn't fit the way I think, or I process things in my brain... So I don't want to be YOU, I want to be MYSELF and I want to be successful by myself”. R12 SL

Under this sub-theme on individualised coaching, an interesting idea emerged from discussions with respondents about the importance of asking coaching

questions. It was identified that the sales representatives prefer a sales leader who asks coaching questions and helps them engage in a discussion about situations, rather than a leader who uses coaching sessions to tell them what to do. There were over 15 references to the importance of using coaching questions. The respondents identified the need for coaching questions on the sales process and asking questions relating to indicators of performance, indicating that sales leaders could make more use of coaching questions, to enable more effective coaching sessions and ultimately enhance salesperson performance. The sales professionals discussed the importance of coaching questions to get self-coaching to occur. The importance of coaching questions is illustrated with the quotes below from a sales leader and two high performing sales representatives.

“The right coaching questions would probably also be possible, because you don’t have all the answers. I have this notion that I actually have got the answers myself, I just need the right questions to answer you coach by asking questions ... to actually ask the right question and ensure that I am not complacent with what I’m doing, that I am constantly looking to see if we can expand what we are doing, not just for now but also in the longer-run”. R22 SR (HP)

“Ask coaching questions... such as ‘what makes us different to our competitors, why should a customer buy from ‘IT Company’ instead of somebody else? The sales leader should be a coach in that, because normally you use your own things, but he should challenge you there, in a positive way” R28 SR (AP)

It was also identified that sales leaders should use coaching as an opportunity to encourage sales representatives to think differently. It was identified that the followers wanted a leader who used coaching sessions to encourage different thinking. They suggested that a leader who helps stimulate ideas, and who jointly solves problems, rather than solving problems by themselves will enhance salesperson performance. The importance of using coaching to stimulate

thinking, and encourage sales representatives to move outside the comfort zone is illustrated in the quotations below.

“As I progress in my sales career, a coach would be like... how would you analyse this situation? And then he allows you just to think through and find the problem or the solution to the problem yourself, as opposed to just telling” R36 (HP)

“Coaching...to just letting their brains find the right solution, by just putting little scenarios in their mind”. R36 SR (HP)

“My sales leader, sometimes he just pulled me back from a situation and he says these are the components here, look at this, what do you see, what’s wrong with this picture? And when you step back from the situation and look at it, we had discussions around sales campaigns, an engagement with a particular person, engagement with particular people internally, positively and negatively, engagement with extremely senior people within customers, with IT Company connections as well, so he was able to guide me and to sometimes give me that clip around the head to say, do you really mean to do that?” R21 SR (HP)

4.4.1.2 Coaching the Sales Process

Strategic sales coaching

Strategic coaching, also referred to by a sales leader as “the art of sales”, was described as coaching the sales representatives on customer opportunities regarding sales strategies, deal-making and the human element of sales, rather than coaching using scientific processes and formulas. Strategic coaching involves working on the deal and working with customers, and this is an element of coaching that is occurring at the IT Company. However, while the sales professionals identified that coaching on sales was occurring at times, it was identified that the quality of this type of coaching could be improved. Strategic coaching was identified as working together to strategise on deals and customer engagements, deal reviews and even coaching on customer meetings. The

importance of coaching the loss of a sale was also identified in this sub-theme by both sets of respondents. There were also discussions about using the coaching leadership behaviour to help salespeople move out of their comfort zone with customers. This is important in the sales context, as it was identified that many sales people stay inside their comfort zones, working with existing customers, and calling on similar executive levels. Leaders who coach their representatives to move outside these comfort zones, to expand their territory reach and call into new executives, such as CFO's, are perceived to help enable salesperson performance. Quotations below describe this subcategory in greater detail.

"It's about having a conversation, either in front of a customer or prior, to just say, "Okay, we're working on this potential transaction. Let's talk through what we think our value proposition is," and I would lean on that leader to fill the gaps, and, to challenge my thinking to say, well did you think about that or just think about this other approach? That sort of thing, because they would have multiple people reporting to them typically, and so I would be one of several, and they would be able to draw upon other people's styles and experiences". R24 SR (LP)

"I think, what are you doing with this deal, it needs to bring in a million or whatever it is. It's where you are at...about coaching and mentoring and providing input on the strategic deal". R3 SR (HP)

"an exploration phase first, inspiration phase and then you make a plan to closing a deal. Then I coach my guys on being more clear on that plan and what that would require, and asking them what would need to happen before we have even closed the deals". R16 SL

Both sets of respondents identified the idea of strategic coaching and suggested that while regular deal reviews did occur, this type of coaching could be improved.

Metrics driven coaching

There were conversations around defining and measuring sales activities, and how these measurements can be used as a vehicle for coaching. One sales leader who had exceptional sales team performance, used a process of identifying leading and lagging indicators as vehicles to coach. The sales leader described the specific coaching leading indicators and lagging indicators in detail. An example of leading indicators is the number of sales calls per week and customer level, and an example of a lagging indicator is the quarterly sales revenue output.

The 'IT Company' was identified as being very focused on lagging indicators and performed numerous reviews each month to ensure the lagging indicators are on track. However, there appeared to be limited focus on measurement of leading indicators. In this research, it was identified that only 25% of the sales leaders mentioned the importance of measuring leading indicators, with no consistency regarding which leading indicators were measured. This research seems to indicate an opportunity may exist to measure leading indicators as a vehicle for coaching to improve performance within the 'IT Company'.

The importance of measuring leading and lagging indicators was discussed with emphasis by a few select sales teams. Both leaders who used metric coaching and the sales representatives who worked with these leaders discussed the importance of this form of coaching. They discussed how leading indicators are important to consider, as well as lagging indicators. The measurement of leading indicators was described as helpful in determining how the sales leader can enable salesperson performance through coaching. Sales leader quotations illustrate the importance of asking questions relating to leading indicators and sales activity with sales representatives.

So, I personally put a lot of effort into measuring the leading indicators because leading indicators will give me a much better bench mark to help me coach people. So coaching is really important to me. The problem if you only measure the lagging indicators... the revenue, if anything goes

wrong you technically only signal towards the end of the quarter, and it's technically too late to do something about it. Whereas, if you measure both leading and lagging indicators, you can take corrective action with the sales person as related to performance much earlier in the quarter, and be of much more benefit to the sales person and subsequently help them improve the performance". R11 SL

"I can actually take the figures and give it to them and say, okay you have a series of activity, here is what you spent on the business and here is another thing, the time you spent on at C level executive sales calls. Now you tell me the story of the month. You tell me what was good or bad, tell me what could have been better about that month. So what happens is that they in a sense, that they coach themselves, all you're doing is facilitating the conversation.... because people know where they are...they don't want to come and face you again with a low activity rate, a low pipeline build...my experience is they don't want to have that conversation, and what you find it is the coaching, as long as you do it properly, that starts to push and move people forward". R11 SL

"The process part of measuring leading and lagging indicators gives me an instrument to measure if there is progress. To measure if people are improving; that's one of the benefits. The other benefit is that I am much more predictable to my management" R13 SL

One sales leader spoke with even greater intensity about the importance of measuring leading indicators and using metrics coaching with other sales leaders, not just sales representatives. He described how he focuses his sales management team on coaching leading and lagging indicators.

"my mantra to them (sales management team) is around the measurement of leading indicators. The question I always ask them is, "When you woke up this morning how do you know you were being successful? How do you know your team was being successful?" The amount of people that cannot answer those questions is unbelievable. I'm constantly reminding them, I

am constantly holding them accountable for their team being over the line, for the percentage of their teams' that are forecasting the revenue amounts... I measure them on how many coaching conversations that we had this week, this month, this quarter. Because again I want to make this real for them. I want them to know it's important and they are going to be measured. ..It's the excellence of how you drive performance, how you improve productivity and as you are doing that, how you keep a sales team motivated and keep them continuing to want to excel, every month, every quarter, every year".... "I measure them on the amount of coaching conversations and they have and I measure them on the amount of customer meetings that they have. I measure them on the percentage of the team that is calling budget in the quarter, in the half year and in the full year". R11 SL

Some sales leaders and sales representatives defined what was included in metrics coaching. The following quotations from two sales leaders illustrate the definition of the construct of coaching by metrics, describing leading and lagging indicators to track specific measurable activities.

"I can ask all my sales people to have weekly meetings, where we discuss these kinds of things. Did you have a meeting? Did you have an executive there? Do you know the decision-making unit? When did you plan the (software) demonstration? So, they get very specific measurable activities, where I can manage them". R12 SL

"So I am a great believer in measuring both leading indicators of success, as well as measuring lagging indicators of success. To contextualise that for me; a lagging indicator would be the revenue you actually write and the pipeline that you build. Whereas, the leading indicator would be the activities that somebody has in a week and in a month, the quality of that activity and the outputs of that activity. "I have a number of leading indicators. The first one is how many calls in a week, the second one is who did you meet with and how many were with the business, and third

part is how many were with C level executives, and then the next part is what were the outputs, so I will also measure the output” R11 SL

The data from both sales leaders and sales representatives suggest an opportunity for the ‘IT Company’ to use coaching metrics to increase salesperson performance. This is something that is only occurring on a selective basis, based on the feedback of the respondents.

The Challenge of Implementation – Coaching vs Micromanaging

While the results suggest that sales leaders who enable performance use coaching, the data also indicates that implementation of this behaviour is challenging. An analysis of the coaching behaviour data demonstrates a richness in this qualitative dataset with respect to implementation that might be difficult to extract using a survey. Comments that some of the sales professionals made were about how coaching too intently can be perceived as micro-management, which is a behaviour that was identified as hindering sales performance. For example, in the discussion about coaching, sales leaders talked about the thin line between coaching and micromanagement. There were also discussions around defining and measuring leading and lagging indicators, how these measurements can be used as a vehicle for coaching. The data revealed that coaching with leading and lagging indicators can enhance sales performance if the behaviour is that of coaching; however, if the leader only insisted on the minimal number of sales calls per day and managed by exception using the correcting behaviour, it would be considered micro management and would probably produce a negative reaction. Another example is how one sales leader required meeting reports after customer meetings, and this was used as a tool to help coach’ however, this practice could easily be seen as micromanagement.

The following quotes from the sales team highlight the importance of using this behaviour correctly, and the importance of listening to enable salesperson performance in the sales context:

“So my commitment has always been that I would never use this on micromanagement.. it would only ever be used to coach, and initially people are skeptical, but by keeping the commitment and continuing the commitment, actually in my experience you build a much more trusting relationship with your team and because they can see the consistency in what you’re doing and they start to understand and see how and why it benefits them”. R11 SL

“I think there is a pretty distinct difference between coaching and micromanagement. Micromanaging may achieve the result in the short-term, but it does not achieve the involvement in the long-term the whole point of having a sales team is you’ve got more people out, feet on the street, more people getting things done, talking to more customers, and closing on business. So that micromanager behaviour essentially diminishes the value. If you micromanage 50% of the time, you only have 1.5 reps working versus the 2 reps, that sort of thing. So coaching versus micromanaging allows the rep to be their best”. R24 SR (LP)

I have a manager who is taking the time on a bi-weekly basis to actually ask into the things I’m doing. My doings and don’ts and coach me. Have you thought about that or that alternative? Why didn’t you think of that? Instead of outlining on a very schematically way what to do. Almost mathematical, it’s more like let’s say, think about that angle, or discover that corner. Lift that stone because these are the things that you need to do. Don’t stare yourself blind in one direction, but take a break, look up, take the helicopter view and re-think, maybe your doings because there may be some hidden diamond in doing things differently. That is for me what a good sales manager should do with a sales rep versus micromanaging. R23 SR (HP)

Coaching Builds Trust

The data indicated that coaching behaviour is tied with trust. The result of the coaching behaviour when done correctly is that trust is built through coaching.

One of the sales leaders pointed out insightfully that trust is not a behaviour; however, it is the result of the coaching leader behaviour and a potential mediator of leadership and salesperson performance. A key quote that illustrates the importance of this was provided by a top-performing sales leader:

“By coaching.... actually, my experience is you build a much more trusting relationship with your team and because they can see the consistency in what you’re doing and they start to understand and see how and why it benefits them so I think that the first thing is trust, I think if you don’t have that it’s very difficult to impact, to positively impact salespersons performance”. R11 SL

The Absence of Coaching in Sales

Despite the perception of importance of this behaviour, the absence of coaching in the sales industry was also identified by the respondents. It is interesting that not only was this one of the most important constructs, but respondents even commented on its absence, indicating a felt absence. In the sales environment leaders often use transactional leader behaviours of rewarding and correcting to meet salesperson performance targets (Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001), and thus the coaching behaviour is not always utilised. The absence of the use of coaching in the sales business is highlighted in the quote below from one sales leader who was appalled to discover the lack of coaching in his own research.

“If you don’t mind if I will bring just a tiny bit of research into this answer that I’ve done in my ‘Masters programme’. When I asked a significant group of sales representatives in terms of numbers, how much time did your manager spend coaching you, and the question was outside of a (sales) opportunity, how much time did he spend coaching you? - the answer in different companies was universally zero. So this was approximately 48 across 10 different companies, coming back and telling me that outside of the deal review they received zero coaching. I went on LinkedIn and I posed that question to the sales leadership community and

I was astounded by the responses that I got back, that ranged from 'I don't think you understand if you bring onboard the right people they don't need coaching' to 'who cares about coaching' to 'if they are not performing just fire them, why would you want to do coaching!' So my research provides some evidence that sales leaders, it seems to me, have not understood the impact that coaching can bring" R11 SL

The absence of coaching both in the sales industry and at the 'IT Company' was identified consistently in the data. Quotations below from two sales leaders and a high performing sales representative highlight this challenge.

"I think one of the great things that we don't use in sales is coaching, it is a great tool". R12 SL

"So there isn't a large emphasis on coaching at the 'IT Company' but partially maybe it's me coming in as one of the more experienced representatives, but I happen to need it still. Most of my managers...actually I don't recall any manager coaching me". R9 SR (HP)

"My global sales managers float into the region. We met some customers. We have few chats about customer deals and so on but they haven't coached me...they don't come and say you should really look at this area because these guys do this really well, or these guys are doing this really well and different. They don't do that at all" R2 SL

The identification of the importance of using the transformational leadership behaviour of coaching in this context is important. While the respondents spoke about how important coaching is, it was also clearly identified that this behaviour is not predominately practiced in the industry and it may provide an interesting opportunity to enhance sales performance.

In summary, there seems to be an opportunity to utilise coaching behaviours to enhance salesperson performance based on these findings; however, there are challenges with implementation. Implications will be discussed in Chapter 6.

4.4.2 Collaboration

While the data partially supports existing leadership theory, new results have also emerged. There was an imperative about 'collaboration'. Collaboration was a main theme from both sales leaders and sales representatives which was referred to 387 times, making it the second most referred to leader behaviour. There were subcategories of collaboration identified that were behavioural. These subcategories were identified in the first semi-structured interviews from the sales leaders and they were repeated throughout the process by all respondents. One was to *model collaboration* and this is done by the sales leader sharing their own networks and by sharing their ideas. Then there was a category of *facilitating collaboration*, which is done by calling meetings and organising conference calls so the sales representatives can talk to each other, sharing wins and losses, sharing best sales practices, and providing contacts, both internally and externally, as the respondents mentioned both. There is also the category of *encouraging collaboration*. The sales leader will encourage the representatives to collaborate, not just model collaboration. There were explicit references to providing suggestions for sales representatives to seek help from, and to provide help to their colleagues. There were also references to help sales representatives identify people internally and externally to help solve the needs of the customer. Networking, both internally and externally, was identified as a theme. Brainstorming and generating new ideas was highlighted as a theme. Telling stories is a model that was identified. The content is stimulating because it is about ideas (Bass, 1985); however, the process is collaborative. There were discussions about team building' however, the behaviour is one of collaboration, and the result is team building.

The overall importance of collaborating as a leadership behaviour to enable salesperson performance was identified in the data frequently. There were numerous references to why this behaviour was so important to salesperson performance. Several examples of quotations relating to the importance of collaboration are included below:

“You need to work together, and collaborate with other colleagues in order to understand different angles, to understand the pain points, understand the road map or history”. R23 SR (HP)

“I am always an advocate for brain-sharing knowledge during collaboration, because most people will know the answer and you just need to know who holds the information”. R33 SR (AP)

“We need to work first with partners outside of “IT Company”, and internally you need to be able to orchestrate the various resources that you have at your disposal..... That is what “IT Company” is when we talk about sales, it is quite a complex ecosystem of experts.... The intelligence of the quota carrier is to work as a team to deliver maximum experience for the end customer, and of course at the end of the day outperform the competition”. R1 SL

“having that right team behind you is really critical and that’s something a sales leader can help with.... fostering that kind of team culture is a huge part of sales.... You need that intellectual power force in your team to be able to solve the problem, to be able to come up with that insight, to be able to advise the client”. R4 SR (AP)

There were interesting stories of the importance of the collaboration leader behaviour. In one of the geographies, a new senior sales leader came in with a new approach, and was perceived to be engaging in collaborative behaviours to enhance salesperson performance in contrast to micromanaging behaviours, which were perceived to hinder salesperson performance. It is interesting that both the coaching and collaborative leadership behaviours have been identified as behaviours to use in contrast to micromanaging, to improve salesperson performance. The following quotation from a sales leader illustrates that while the previous senior management team was focused primarily on demanding pipeline figures, the new management is focused on how they can help the team get to the pipeline requirement:

“before, it was you need 3 times pipeline, you need 3 times pipeline, you need 3 times pipeline. Now it’s HOW are we going to get you to 3 times pipeline and let’s share all the best practices and let’s develop best practices, and let’s meet every week and let’s drive disciplines and let you know as a team, let’s work on developing pipeline. Whereas before, it was, you need 3 times pipeline, you haven’t got 3 times pipeline, go away and get 3 times pipeline”. R2 SL

The respondents defined the collaboration leadership behaviour. This was done numerous times in the semi-structured interviews. It was defined as a construct overall and in subcategories. The quotations below will have identified these definitions.

“My sales leader does an extremely good job, I think she is the best in the company at what she does by the way. She is bringing everybody together, so you have got a lot more, like two brains work a lot better than one to solve a problem, imagine six and seven brains?” R24 SR (LP)

“I hope I’m building sales excellence by learning from others, because what somebody does in one part may be relevant in a slightly different way or applied in a different way I should say to another part. We can all be successful when we learn from each other” R10 SL

“We all share and bring ideas to the table and help each other during this monthly two-hour session. It’s a great way of doing it because we get maximum attention from everyone”. R23 SR (HP)

“I like that they use me to get their collaboration with the team. They work together, find solutions together. They don’t need me every time, it’s just constant learning.” R10 SL

The subcategory of facilitating collaboration was most frequently mentioned. A sales leader from Europe spoke how he helped facilitate collaboration on territory planning within the local subsidiary.

“I ask the sales guy, the sales rep to make a prioritise list, and then I let him present his tier one customers to a group of people, i.e. management, and let them build a business case. So which customers, why do you think you can win, what are the benefits of winning that customer? What are the costs of the sales cycle? I let them present the whole case to five or six sales managers in IT Company, and then they are in a group and take the decision. Are we willing to invest two or three years in a case or not ...and then it's a group decision. If we lose, I always then go back - it was a group decision. That is the most important reason why I am doing this because if you are sitting side by side with 6 people discussing the sales cycle you always get the brilliant ideas. The one guy says you have to try this, the other says, “I have a relative working at this company,” and the third says there are all kinds of relations”. R13 SL

Included in this subcategory was the theme of internal networking. This notion of creating internal support networks and working collaboratively within organisations was identified as one of the five under-researched sales performance areas (Evans et al., 2012). This theme emerged from feedback from the respondents. A sales leader gave an interesting example of how she uses this leadership behaviour:

“I try to extend my network into their network and they are now doing the same thing as well. So I make Monday morning calls about this...for example a rep says she is having trouble with a customer, another rep will say call this person, he will be able to help you....supporting the sales person to develop in that area (engaging and leveraging the rest of the organization) or facilitating those links and those engagements with the different colleagues”. R10 SL

In some semi-structured interviews, very clear examples were provided on how to utilise this behaviour to enable salesperson performance. The quotation below from a sales leader provides an example of how she utilises this behaviour to enable performance on her team.

“Collaborative meetings can speak about things like we met with the CEO last week, great job on calls, or a rep is running something in (a city name) and had these great client meetings last week. This helps enable the rest of the country. They might say hey where did you go to talk about that, with the CEO of X company approach. I will say well you guys have that conversation later today when it’s convenient for you both. I hope I’m building sales excellence by learning from others because what somebody does in one part may be relevant in a slightly different way or applied in a different way in their part. We can all be successful when we learn” R10 SL

It was identified that great performers work collaboratively and can orchestrate internal and external resources for the customer. This is linked to enabling salesperson performance.

“What is key to a great performer is the ability to work in teams. We need to work first with partners outside of IT Company and internally you need to be able to orchestrate the various resources that you have at your disposal. If you look at the way we operate at IT Company, we have built an ecosystem of supporting roles, which are extremely effective.... We have presales experts for all the demos and product expertise. We have value engineers who are more type of maturity who can use business case analysis for industries. We have industry principals who are industry experts working in various industries who can evangelise the trends and what is going on in the industry to speak head to head with key guys in the customer. We have maintenance and education and sales guys who are able to conduct special education services and maintenance to the customer, and all this needs to be managed by the account executive in a specific way. Of course, we also have the line of business solution specialists who are experts in one of our 3000 solutions, who have a more solution specific focus, rather than an industry focus. That is what IT Company is when we talk about sales. It is quite a complex eco system of experts.... The intelligence of the quota carrier is to work as a team to

deliver maximum experience for the end customer and of course at the end of the day outperform the competition” R1 SL

The Collaborative Leader behaviour represents an interesting new finding. While the importance of collaboration is recognised in organisations and research (Evans et al., 2012), this has not been called out as a separate leadership behaviour in the literature. Utilising this leadership behaviour provides an opportunity for sales leaders to help enable salesperson performance.

4.4.3 Championing

There were two findings regarding the ‘championing’ leader behaviour, firstly the existence of it as a leadership behaviour, which is perceived to enhance sales performance. This behaviour was referred to 319 times, making it one of the more frequently identified sales leader behaviours. The second finding is how the behaviour is viewed by the two parties of sales leaders and sales representatives. The same behaviour is interpreted two different ways by the leader and follower. The actual behaviour was identified as an intervention to keep indirect internal managers and repetitive internal processes from interfering with the sales representatives’ focus on generating revenue with customers. An example of using the championing behaviour may be when the sales leader acts as an internal champion for the sales representatives by blocking low value-add ‘repetitive’ inspection on sales opportunities, and helping with escalations internally. A sales representative defined the behaviour as the following:

“Helping support efficient behaviour by eliminating wherever possible nonessential activity and nonessential communications to the employee that are not directly in line with their task at hand”. R26 (AP)

This same behaviour that was identified as protecting by the sales representatives, was identified as sales enabling by the sales leaders. Upon deeper analysis of the data, it became apparent that both sets of respondents used the term ‘championing’, which seemed to be the best term to represent the behaviour.

The championing behaviour is important in the sales context, as sales representatives are working on the front line with customers, and consequently have access to a significant amount of information. The organisation requires reporting information on customers, however too many requests for the same information can distract the sales team from their core job. A focus on over-reporting and numerous requests for information was identified as a key change in the modern sales environment, and therefore the sales representatives identified a need for sales leaders to shield them from these types of requests. This concept represented a main theme found in the research. Overall, based on the data, it seems that there is a need for this leader behaviour to enable the sales team to focus on the customer. The following quotations demonstrate perceptions of the importance of the championing leadership behaviour:

“Interviewer: Why does it matter to protect the people from that when they are in sales? Respondent: “Because they should spend maximum time with the customer”. R31 SR (HP)

“You can waste a lot of your day and a lot of your lives constantly reporting on the things you’re supposed to be doing, and you are not doing as many of those things because you are constantly reporting. It’s a problem with the industry generally; a good manager will keep them down to a minimum, will keep these people away from you”. R20 SR (AP)

“I think the higher up you go into the sales management chain, the more important it is for those sales managers to work across the organisation to fix the problems that they are getting in the way of you selling”. R2 SL

The sales professionals defined what was included in the challenging leadership behaviour construct. Under this heading there were references to factors, such as protecting and internal championing to clearing road blocks, providing escalations, reducing administration, and problem solving. The identification of quarterly pressure and the additional demands on the sales representatives for reporting was discussed frequently. The sales professionals recognised that there was a challenge in managing all these requests and being able to focus on

the customer to generate results. This is where the need for the sales leader to step in and champion the sales representative was identified. There was a clear view that a sales leader who championed causes for their sales representatives and broke down internal barriers and sheltered the team from repetitive, low value add requests could enable salesperson performance.

Sales representatives gave interesting analogies of the championing behaviour, including what may occur in a war, how the leader would go to battle for their team internally, and how leaders can act as a sponge to shelter their team. Filtering was a key theme around this behaviour. Some sales professions used creative analogies, such as air cover, a sponge, and even a snow plough to help describe the behaviour during the semi-structured interviews. Quotes that define what is included in this construct are included below:

“The point is as soon as we are under pressure, we fall into these forecast reviews, and a leader should be strong enough to create the space for thinking and reflection, and be strong enough to rise above the pressure, and protect his team from the pressure of the boat; I call this umbrella management. He has to play the role of the umbrella to protect his team from the corporate noise and pressure, forecast pressure from regional presidents. To make sure his team keeps on working, based on quality and trust and do not discount for the sake of discount.” R1 SL

“Yeah, it’s around the analogy in a battle or a war situation, you don’t want a bomb dropping on you as you are trying to do your job, so that the analogy of people very high up, without a contextual understanding are creating additional work, which will not directly contribute to the closing or completion of the sale. So from that it’s pretty very much the bomb is dropping, the noise that comes from people well intentioned without the localise context who can’t actually contribute directly to the closing or completion of the sales opportunity.... “It’s air cover, keeping noise away from the frontline sales people so that I can focus on executing the sales deal, as opposed to being dragged into more operational issues, which is

one of the key things, and then be ready to protect a frontline person from that level of activity” R7 SR (LP)

“As a manager my task is to be the snowplough to run in front of you, the sales rep, and clean out the clutter and help you have as much time as possible with the client and do what you do best. That’s possibly half of the snowplough. The other one is about enabling focus that they can focus their time”. R16 SL

“It’s about being a sponge from a manager’s position to make sure all of that (reporting, management reports) does not come down and filter on and inhibit the sales people. If I was a manager, I would soak that all up as a manager.” R6 SR (LP)

The followers valued a sales leader backing their team on deals and obtaining approvals and escalations to help keep the deal moving forward. Internal challenges relating to pricing, technology configuration, and inter-divisional disagreements need to be addressed to enable salesperson performance. There were also references to championing additional learning for the sales team. Enabling focus was a key theme that emerged in response to questions about how the championing behaviour could be helpful. The following quotations provide additional insights on the definition of this construct.

“It’s allowing me as the salesperson to focus on selling and taking care of some of those internal things that can get you bogged down otherwise, for example administration, dealing with -- when you get near to closing a deal, all of a sudden there are 100 people who want updates, and so to kind of shield you from that noise and weather during a closing or any kind of knot, so to act as a filter. So there’s a barrier, breaking down barriers. So there’s a filtering of stuff that comes from above and helping the sales rep spend time on the things that are important. So ignore this stuff you’re being asked to do, focus on this, because I, as the sales leader, I’m going to take care of it for you or I’ll help you prioritise, that sort of thing. So it’s like the filter, as well as a barrier breaker I suppose”. R24 SR (LP)

“In a large corporation, there are so many people, a lot of people work in silos. There are several different departments where everybody needs to be convinced that this is the right thing to do and that’s extremely tough to do, because... this software, I sold it to the customer, now I need to sell the idea internally that we should make the sale and this is tougher, so I would expect my manager to help me manage this while I’m dealing with the customer, which should be my primary focus “ R25 SR (AP)

“where it broke down in the past is when the individual sales contributor is not only having to brief their boss but having to brief their boss’ boss and then having to brief the boss’ boss’ boss. And then they are pulled onto multiple calls at various different levels to repeat the same level of information up and down the chain. You as an individual contributor want to be able to tell a sales management person once and for it to be recorded as organisational knowledge, rather than having to repeat that information up the chain multiple times” R7 SR (LP)

“In these huge corporations that we work for, you have a lot of processes, internal processes. At the beginning of the call, I told you I spent a lot of time selling internally, more time than externally, which is extremely bad. If I wanted something more from my manager... not only from my manager because I know she is fighting her own fights on the same topic, it is to have an organisation where there is less internal processes and we are more focused on selling to the customers than selling internally”. R25 (AP)

Another aspect of the ‘championing’ leader behaviour uncovered, related to learning and sales enablement. Providing learning opportunities and sales tools were themes identified. Examples of a quotation from a sales leader and a sales representative are included below.

“my work as a leader is to ensure that all these guys are awesome and have awesome tools and processes to operate better with the customers. Because if they do that, I am successful. That does not mean everything

for me is to be successful on my own. It is about enabling our sales organisation to be successful". R12 SL

"The training is imperative, getting good training and product training, so that at least you know what you are talking about. That is an enabler that can help". R3 SR (HP)

The respondents identified how the championing leadership behaviour could positively impact salesperson performance. They spoke at length about how the internal challenges and processes interfered with their ability to focus on the customer and generating revenue. The requirement for the ability to focus on the client, rather than selling internally, was communicated consistently. The quotation below from a high performing sales representative illustrates the link between this behaviour and salesperson performance.

"my sales leader stood up and resisted the upper leadership and fought for me. The effect on me worked well. I regard him with a lot of respect, and it also makes me want to go that extra mile to perform extra and to prove that my sales leader made the right decision when he had my back". R21 SR (HP)

A sales leader in a smaller geography identified a simple way to champion the cause for his sales team to enable salesperson performance. To champion sales representatives' focus on the customer, rather than internal reporting, he hired a part-time person to support the additional tracking requirements required by the business. This enabled the sales representatives to focus on revenue generation and increase salesperson performance. It also enabled the geography to meet their reporting requirements. In this case, the sales leader championed the sales representatives and found a solution, which would enable the representatives to maximise their time with the customer and enhance salesperson performance.

"I must admit that those are similar tracking here within "IT Company" that started off I would say one year ago or so. But because our sales leader got a guy that works here part-time, he goes into to calendars

and we have marked customer meetings in green and so he counts the meetings. So I'm not spending anytime on it. Here they can keep their tracking and don't waste my time, which enables me to be with customers and sell". R22 SR (HP)

The championing behaviour is a new finding. Although the literature has discussed aspects of issue that exist without the sales environment (Evans et al., 2012; Ingram et al., 2005), it has not identified championing as a key leadership behaviour. The context of the complex sales environment has highlighted the importance of this behaviour, and implications will be covered in the discussion chapter.

4.4.4 Customer Engagement

As the coding was aggregated into broader based codes, another novel leadership behaviour emerged from a composite of comments relating to supporting the sales team in customer engagements. This behaviour has been referred to as the customer engagement leader behaviour. There were 230 references about this behaviour by the respondents. There were references about this behaviour by both sales leaders and sales representatives; however there seemed to be more voice on this topic from the sales representatives. Interestingly, the high performing sales representatives spoke more frequently about this behaviour than the average or low performing representatives. The differences identified between the respondents will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

The overall results suggest that respondents in this research believe strongly that sales leaders need to be engaged with customers. The perception is that if sales leaders help sales representatives overcome challenges in the customer situations, they enable the sales team to win more business. The following quotations illustrates the importance of using the customer engagement behaviour and/or approach that was discussed consistently throughout the research process:

“the leaders that I respond to best are those who are willing to be what I call captains not coaches. Those who are willing to get out in the field, who want to move the ball, who want to take responsibility and want to proactively work with you on achieving the sale, on achieving the P.O. (purchase order), on achieving the target that’s available. So those who want to get involved and take on responsibility and help assist when appropriate a manager can help you identify what you need to have in terms of getting a deal from discovery stage to closing stage. If they can help you along the way, I think that’s how they can actually influence”. R7 SR (LP)

“If the million-dollar deal is not moving, it’s because somebody within the (customer) organisation is not understanding the value of proposition that we’re putting across. So either we are not positioning right, or we are talking to the wrong people. And this is where then the issues can be and sales leaders should help”. R3 SR (HP)

There were discussions which led to an understanding of the sales professionals’ definition of the customer engagement leadership behaviour. The sales team suggested that a sales leader who showed a willingness to get into the field, engaging with customers, and who helped position the solution with customers, was perceived to be the type of leader who enabled salesperson performance. The sales professionals valued sales leaders who could understand and help meet customers’ needs and assist in closing the business. Customer reviews were conducted by some sales leaders to identify key strategic account plans, stakeholders, budget, timing issues, etc. and these reviews were identified by the respondents as helpful in enabling salesperson performance. Customer centricity, customer engagement working with the sales team, and customer prospect building by sales leaders were categories identified in this leadership behaviour. The following quotation illustrates the sales professionals’ perceptions of the definition of the behaviour and actions that would occur.

“There needs to be willingness to understand what is going on with the particular customer opportunity, as opposed to focus on what the outcome of that opportunity is”. R7 SR (LP)

“He would be invited to meetings because he could add value to the meetings. He wasn’t invited to meetings just to be there. So yeah, I’ve met the CFO of X company, he actually came to add value. He would wipe out stuff and he would give his insight into certain topics, he would talk about his background, anything... he would give a whole presentation full of content and we would be learning from what he was doing. And of course he would learn from us as well” R21 SR (HP)

Another interesting finding is that the sales professionals highlighted the importance of sales managers having tough conversations about deals early in the sales process. This is also included in the definition of the behaviour. The result suggests that sales leaders may help lead the process of understanding key opportunities, and help the team understand why they have won and why they have lost. The perception is that if sales leaders help sales representatives overcome challenges in the deal, it can help the team win. The following two sales representative’s quotations illustrate this idea:

“it’s really about making sure you have those ugly conversations early, rather than late. The last thing you want is to accept the sales person number for a very long period of time and then two weeks before it’s supposed to be closed and the other guy goes, “We lost this opportunity and we don’t know why.” So it’s good to have some kind of a checklist and good on its view of what’s happening into the account”. R3 SR (HP)

“It’s more I’ve been thinking about the deal and this is what I’m trying to do, or how did you go with this particular problem and do you need any assistance from me?The cadence call should not be about what’s happening with the deal, it’s more about saying I’m aware what’s happening, what assistance do you need or what are the challenges that you need to bring up, so I can pair up a group of profession and we can address the challenges”..... “So having those deal clinics, as we call

them, with management highlighting the areas within the opportunity and putting together a close plan so that's very beneficial" R7 SR (LP)

Some sales professionals suggested that the sales leaders and company leadership team need to engage more closely with the customers, and even start developing new relationships and prospect building to help the sales team generate revenue. Having the sales leaders develop prospects for the business through customer engagement was a key theme identified, and helps further define the behaviour.

"We need to get out there and help us build a sales line in places that we aren't already. At the 'IT Company' as you probably know, 80% of our business comes from 20% of our clients. We need our sales leadership, including myself to be out there, going to meetings at CIO (Chief Information Officers) and CEOs (Chief Executive Officers). Get out there, talk to board members of companies that we don't do business with or we do. Partner relationships. Keep that going and start focusing on this Vice President of the sales. Get out there and get us known and branded better in the community, such that we can drive more sales". R10 SL

"So we need to get over ourselves I think and start getting those people with the titles out. They have a great avenue for business partners. Why don't we have some concrete relationship with those senior partners? I mean like the candidate leaders for assure, candidate leaders for IBM not partners, I mean there are partners but not that make sense. Why aren't we doing more of concrete sales, targeted at certain accounts where they have relationships or we have relationships? I really think our leadership should be showing more responsibility, as opposed to chasing in quarter sales". R10 SL

A few specific sales leaders supported the need for this customer engagement behaviour. The idea of executive level support and customer engagement was discussed. One of the top performing sales leaders highly supported this idea and stated the following about how he is personally involved in customer engagement:

“I would be there and I would be pitching, I would support the executive sponsor on every deal so they could see how I would pitch and they could see how I would have the executive level conversations”. R11 SL

To be successful in utilising this behaviour, the importance of having sales experience was discussed. One of the sales leaders suggested that having sales experience and using influencing behaviours with customers is an important aspect of sales leadership and impacts on salesperson performance. This is illustrated in the quotation from the sales leader below:

“you need to show that you have been successful and you understand sales. You cannot come from outside. The role modelling is the first aspect of a great sales leader. You should be able to help on a deal and close a deal the reps would not be able to close and this role modelling is key criteria for trust and motivation for the sales guys”. R1 SL

While the data indicates that sales experience is important, the customer engagement behaviour is more than just selling. It is about how the sales leaders engage with customers and the sales representatives. Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2008) found that sales representatives do not value a sales leader who does the selling for them. That finding is supported by this research, as some respondents shared concerns about sales leaders who took over at the account. Finding the balance and right interaction with the customer and sales representatives is an important piece of this leadership behaviour. This behaviour is about how the sales leader engages with the customer and the sales representative. It is both important for sales leaders to have sales experience and to support the team in the right way, helping to enable salesperson performance.

The sales professionals spoke about how the customer engagement leadership behaviour could positively influence salesperson performance. They identified this as a key behaviour for sales leaders to utilise to enable salesperson performance. The respondents made it clear that their preference was for sales leaders to use this behaviour to help the team with customer engagements. One sales leader was very focused on customer engagement and stated the following quotation to highlight how it impacts salesperson performance.

“it’s more of a feeling if I had not been at customers meeting for a couple of days, it’s like if I haven’t been to the gym; I sort of get itchy and feel that I haven’t really added any value. For me, it’s more of an internal thing. That drives me. It’s a core belief that the only way to make money is to go to clients”. R16 SL

Finally, it is notable that this leadership behaviour is not always prevalent. In the sales environment, it may seem obvious that sales leaders should use customer engagement behaviours; however, this research indicates that sales leaders often get focused on deal reporting and transactional leadership behaviours, rather than engaging with customers. Consistently, respondents discussed how sales leaders are so busy reporting the numbers that they don’t have time to engage with customers. There was a view among some of the respondents that the sales leaders do not engage with customers as much as they should and that they could make a positive impact on salesperson performance. The quotations below demonstrate the challenges that exist for sales leaders, and the importance of customer experience in sales leadership.

“I find that many times, a sales manager role is a lot about just feeding up numbers to go to the organisation, but it should be that the sales manager should know at least conversational level what’s happening in each of their accounts in which their sales people are involved”. R8 SR (AP)

“A manager can help you identify what you need to have in terms of getting a deal from discovery stage to closing stage. If they can help you along the way, I think that is how they can actually influence”. R7 SR (LP)

For many of the respondents, the importance of customer engagement was evident. Based on this research it is important for sales leaders to have customer experience and utilise this experience to engage with customers in an appropriate manner, adding value to the process to help enable salesperson performance.

4.4.5 Challenging

The transformational leadership behaviour of ‘intellectual stimulation’ (Bass, 1985), which will be referred to here as ‘challenging’, was identified as a

leadership behaviour, perceived to enhance salesperson performance. At the 'IT Company' the sales team has been trained on the Challenger Sale (Dixon and Adamson, 2010) training programme. In this programme they were taught to use aspects of the intellectual stimulation leader behaviour with customers to add value in the sales process. The sales professionals were taught to ask questions of customers and encourage the rethinking of ideas to help customers solve problems. Respondents of this research suggested that this type of leadership behaviour should also be used by sales leaders to encourage the sales representatives to think about customer problems and internal problems in new ways. There were 98 references made to this behaviour (Table 4-1) in relation to enabling salesperson performance.

Respondents suggested that a leader who uses the challenging behaviour will enable salesperson performance and it is important to use this behaviour in the complex sales context. There was emphasis on the importance of thinking differently and outside the box, and how sales leaders can help. Examples of quotations of the importance of these behaviours are included below:

"Creativity. To be a good sales person you need to be creative in terms of finding solutions to customer problems. So from a support perspective, I would say that good support from the management to be effective is about finding new ways.... for example, the leader might say so I have another method for you to get to that angle and let me show you what I would think, there could be a plan C and D, have you considered these or not? Obviously, you have to exhaust every option that you have and then maybe this is it, this is the best we can do and then there's an announcement, okay? But I think the role should be to exhaust every option that is available. So, the sales manager should be able to facilitate to come with different plans of attacks that may not have been considered by the sales person". R3 SR (HP)

"And all about challenging the customer and of course not in an inappropriate way but keeping the client thinking. It's too easy for a person

to get into a day job and answer their emails, but let's challenge the customer in new ways". R10 SL

"Again, knowledge sharing and giving you advice and ideas. I think what they give you is different perspective and different angle on what you may be looking at for too long in a certain way. A new set of eyes ideas, where you might be looking at a problem for a while, and then you need someone walks in and you ask them to give you a whole new perspective on it. I guess it just gives you this angle of the same problem". R34 SR (AP)

One of the younger sales representatives highlighted the importance of considering new ideas and different approaches to increase salesperson performance. They suggested that working in new ways with customers and finding ways to adapt more quickly to the changing work environment is key. The quotation below from a European sales representative highlights this thought process:

"Stay open for new thoughts, sales leaders tend to be middle aged or a bit older. For example, I am 33 years old. We have new sales guys come up from the 'IT Company' sales academy and those guys and girls are great. They're like 25, 26 years of age and they have such a different view of the world. They've such a new view on the world. You should embrace that and fire it up, and let those guys and girls do their utmost best to convince you not to do it in traditional ways. Always stay open for new thoughts, listen to your guys. If you do that, in combination with what I've talked to you already, you could create a great team". R29 SR (HP)

The respondents described the behaviour in detail and provided ideas on how sales leaders can use this leadership behaviour. They suggested that a sales leader should question assumptions, and encourage followers to develop solutions to customer problems. Some of the references to the challenging behaviour were also double coded to coaching in the sub-node (second level coding structure) titled asking 'coaching questions'. In both nodes, respondents discussed the importance of having a sales leader who asks questions, which encourages new thinking, idea generation and problem solving. Using

constructive tension as part of this construct was identified as a way to encourage new ideas. The quotations below identify these descriptions.

“...he will challenge you on the right terms and he is creative in what could make the difference”. R28 SR (AP)

“When my sales leader did the review, it was actually a mentally stimulating process, where sometimes he would just say ‘I think we will do the review on what you think you need today’..... then he would use constructive tension on the team and he would use it on individuals in the team, and collectively as a team. Definitely, absolutely cool, I’m probably stumbling over something now, which probably I haven’t really thought about but, definitely, that was one of his traits. And it wasn’t necessarily to catch people up, it was to generate new ideas”. R21 SR (HP)

“I think first thing is to do an analysis of situation, what do you need to know, to fix something, or to help something thought you need to know, really what the situation is right. You need to frame at first and then find what the real issue. We need to listen more and understand really what is the real problem. We need to listen to people that are on the ground, understand really what is the problem, and involve them in the solution.” R12 SL

“He will challenge you on the things you are doing instead of okay, okay, okay, he can also say “why are you doing this or why are you doing that? Have you thought about this?” R28 SR (AP)

The respondents linked this behaviour to enabling salesperson performance. Due to the changes in the sales environment requiring the sales representatives to challenge customers, they also need this behaviour to be role modelled to them. They suggested that by challenging sales representatives a sales leader can enable salesperson performance. The quotations below from a sales representative provide an illustration of this link.

“It (constructive tension) can be uncomfortable and it often was very uncomfortable with my sales leader but I knew that I was benefiting from

it. I knew that he was asking those questions not to catch me out, but to actually enhance what we were doing as a team. It was about the team and it was about personal performance.” R21 SR (HP)

This leadership behaviour does seem to be utilised in the ‘IT Company’. The Challenger Sales (Dixon and Adamson, 2011) training did include the leadership team, so perhaps they are consciously using this to grow the business.

4.4.6 Creating Vision

As expected, there were discussions about the importance of creating a vision. As identified by Bass (1985), the importance of the visioning (individualised influence) behaviour was also confirmed by this research. There were 91 references made to this behaviour (Table 4-1). This behaviour is one whereby the leader communicates a shared vision of the future and leads by example (Bass, 1985). As the sales team needs to be able to communicate the strategy to customers understanding, and communicating the vision seems to be key and linked to performance. There was an identification of the sales team’s need to understand strategic directions of the organisation, and how that fits with their work with customers. There were also many references to the importance of leading by example. Visioning continues to be an important behaviour for a sales leader. Examples of quotations regarding the importance of visioning are included below:

“they (sales leaders) have to OWN the strategy and Communicate the strategy and talk about the why. The strategy sets a straight line. I mean it’s super important”. R16 SL

“creating an environment that provides clarity into the sales organisation about what the goals are... One is clarity. So people want to know why do I need to do this, so why are things going like that? So as much that you can inform the people about market opportunities, as much data you share with them is important. Providing the clarity first on why we are doing this and what is good for the company and what is in it for me as an employee as well”. R12 SL

“The vision. What we have seen and what we are doing from a training perspective is helping the front line managers build a vision for the team. We realize that because we are such a transactional culture the front line sales manager has very little time to reflect. Because they have little time to reflect and spend lots of time on excel spreadsheet. They have very little time to think about the vision and where they want their teams to land at the end of the year. So the vision is the second aspect. Unless you know where you are going to go, you might not drive the motivation from your team the way you would like to do so”. R1 SL

Definition of the visioning behaviour from the respondents centred upon strategic planning, setting clear expectations and role modelling. The quotations below illustrate respondents' definition of the construct.

“I think demonstrating some thought leadership and a strategic point of view in terms of where you want the business to go. I could see some departments bring some of these together. Understanding the industry back to what we talked about the beginning. Understanding the challenges that can face the industry including putting in place together that will drive what we all want, which is a corporate to be successful and out to meet the sales target and make money”. R10 SL

“A sales leader responsibility to really accesses what is possible in the market, what is the best sales flavour, what's the best strategy.... That's good the moment you think about it, we are an enterprise company and in the last seven years we decided to sell into small medium enterprise. They have time to squeeze the business into a different market, and it has its own challenge. It doesn't mean that they don't try, but I think it is the leader's responsibility to recognise the situation, recognise those gaps, and walk up and try to make it work and influence the decisions on a global level. Then it will feed in your team with everything that you can, to make them the best sales team”. R17 SL

“Setting the vision for your team, that helps work more strategically”. R16 SL

Creating Vision impacts performance. It provides clarity, enables communication of the vision to customers in convincing and completing ways, and ultimately enhances performance. One sales leader tied his vision in with his team's success, and ultimately that helped lead his team to this success:

"I only exist as a sales leader to get every single one of my sales people over the line". R11 SL

Quotations that demonstrate how creating vision enhances performances are listed below and relate to how the vision can lead to tangible results and success.

"From the beginning, the clearer the boundaries are, the more my territory is defined; I will find it easier to execute on that throughout the year". R35 SR (LP)

"He transforms the company strategy into something tangible that the sales team has to do. A good leader is able to transform the strategy into tangible actions within the sales team". R15 SL

Creating Vision did not receive as many references as some of the other leadership behaviours identified, yet the importance remains constant. The identification of this behaviour supports Bass' model and it seems is done with consistency in the "IT Company", and is too important not to include in the framework.

4.4.7 Candidate Recruiting

One of the findings that may create interesting discussion within the sales community is a call out from this research for increasing the alignment between sales and human resources. There were 59 references made to the 'Candidate Recruiting' behaviour (Table 4-1). One sales representative who came from a different industry and background was amazed at how human resources was underutilised in the sales environment, as can be seen in the quotation below.

"Sales is hard core because you have to bring in the numbers, but there's also different ways in doing it. I believe there should be maybe a greater

connect between sales leadership and HR.... what I mean by that is that to me, just looking at cold statistical data is very, I mean to me that isn't leadership, that is just making decisions based on numbers and not even actually understanding what the problem is, and to me that's very mechanical; you might as well have the computers make decisions for you. I mean you don't need a leader to take, make decisions based on numbers like that, so I think it is important to bring in maybe a more organic approach and more people skills, more empathy, more understanding of this thing, and this is where HR really can reason contribute". R23 SR (HP)

Then interestingly, two of the top performing sales leaders identified an element of human resources - recruiting - as a top sales leader behaviour, and they both spoke of it at length, with great emphasis. The Recruiting categories were identified as a key finding in the data. In one interview, there were many examples of the importance of recruiting. It is something the two top performing sales leaders spent the first third of their semi-structured interviews discussing. The recruiting behaviour is concerned with involving and practicing an effective recruitment process. An exploration of how sales can better align with human resources is something to be considered and analysed. Quotations about the importance of developing an effective recruitment process as provided below.

"If you don't hire the right people, you are not going to get the right results. So why not spend a little more time on the interviewing process and capability and sales experience, industry dollars, and you will likely have less turnover. I believe in that strongly". R10 SL

"I re-built the sales recruitment process in order to make sure that as we brought somebody onboard, the chance of them being successful was exponentially increased - so we started to recruit very differently." R11 SL

The sales leaders identified this behaviour about building an effective recruitment process. It was noticeably, and unsurprisingly not mentioned by the sales representatives. Respondents defined this behaviour in terms of measurement

and actions taken to recruit a candidate. Respondents spoke about asking certain questions, interviewing in different locations, involving sales representatives in their team in the recruiting process (matrix interviewing). Onboarding was also a theme identified in this behaviour and one sales leader mentioned that collaboration began during the interview process to facilitate onboarding. Some quotations which describe this candidate recruiting behaviour as included below:

“I measure whether those people have fire in their belly and the motivation and the tenacity. I do that by interviewing. So I look for those things when I interview, because those to me will be ingredients to the successful sales performer”. R10 SL

“In the interview we gave people a scenario and they could only write back to us the scenario that we gave them....we started to bring on board people then that were comfortable in taking a message and simplifying it. Who clearly had a value system that was important to them that drove them” R11 SL

Candidate recruiting was identified as having a clear link to sales performance by the sales leaders who had implemented in the recruiting processes. The best example of this is seen in the quotation below by a top performing sales leader who used this behaviour to help turn around a team he was running:

“....not only did we see a big impact in performance for most people, but we also took the down the attrition rate of the region significantly”. R11 SL

While there were not as many references to this behaviour as others, it was discussed with great emphasis by 4 successful sales leaders. Also, one of the sales representatives who had come from a different industry, posed the interesting idea that sales and human resources could be aligned more effectively. This is a potential area to explore.

4.4.8 Inspiring & Rewarding

Another transformational leadership behaviour identified in the data was 'inspiring'. The inspiring leader behaviour, referred to as inspirational motivation by Bass (1985) relates to the generation of excitement and enthusiasm at work through communication and by expressing confidence in the followers. There were 55 references made to this behaviour (Table 4-1). This behaviour is important and much of the literature supports the use of this behaviour in addition to other transformational leadership behaviours to help generate high performance (Bass, 1985). Even more interesting, is that the rewarding leadership behaviour, called recognising (Bass, 1985) was identified; however, with a fewer number of references and less emphasis. There were only 39 references made to this behaviour (Table 4-1). This was surprising as the literature and industry has long supported that the rewarding leadership behaviour is important in the sales context (Dubinsky et al., 1995). Rewarding and providing appropriate rewards when sales representatives meet quota objectives is a cornerstone to sales leadership. This research has uncovered that there are other leadership behaviours that are perceived to enhance salesperson performance more than this behaviour. There were specific references to the importance of moving away from the stick and carrot (transactional leadership) model, towards the need for new leadership behaviours, due to changes in the modern sales environment. This represents a major shift of thinking for the context of this research.

While these behaviours were discussed in the semi-structured interviews and clearly are important – they were not discussed with as much frequency and emphasis as the other behaviours listed above. Perhaps these behaviours are assessed with such regularity in the sales industry that the respondents did not feel the need to call it out specifically. It could also be that rewarding had fewer references because it may be perceived to be part of the system rather than part of the leader's behaviour. It is important to note that these behaviours will enable salesperson performance based on this research and the literature; however, they are not the top behaviours that respondents discussed.

4.5 Potential mediators

The findings of the analysis suggest that the ability of a sales leader to enable sales performance may be mediated by other factors. When analysing the interviews, potential mediators emerged from the data. These were identified as trust, confidence, optimism, and resilience as illustrated in Figure 4-2.

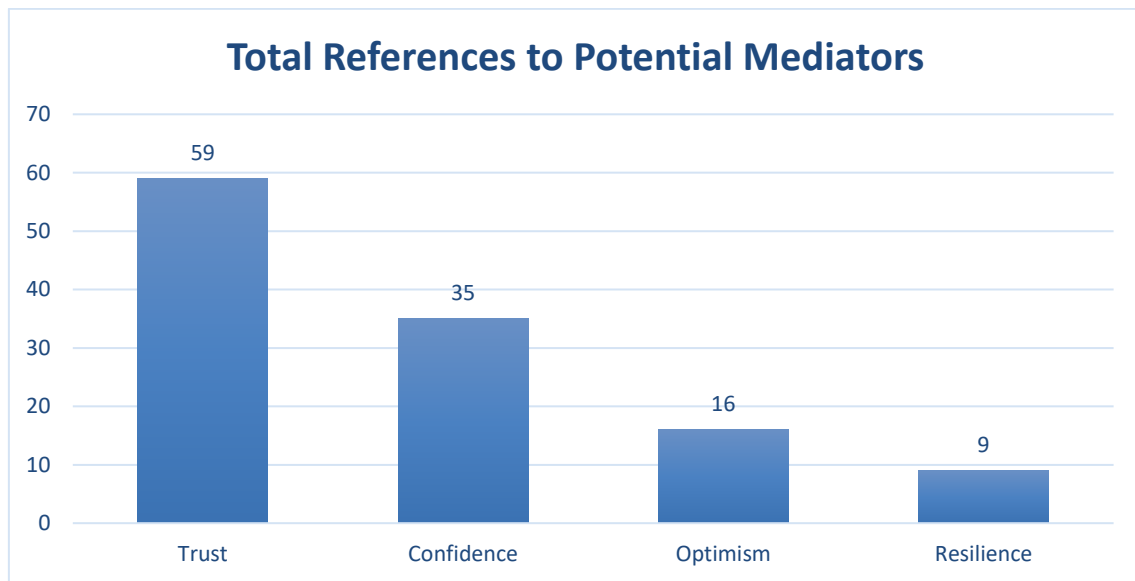


Figure 4-2 Total references to potential mediators

The identification of potential mediators in this study is an important finding, as it suggests that leadership behaviours and potential mediators resulting from the interaction between the sales leader and the sales representative may enable salesperson performance.

Mediator variables specify how or why a particular effect or relationship occurs. Mediators act as an intermediate variable in a 2-step process (Hair, Jr. et al., 2016). The data suggests there is a direct and an indirect link from the leadership behaviours identified (except for the leadership behaviour of candidate recruiting) to salesperson performance outcomes. For example, the leadership behaviour of coaching was suggested to impact trust and potentially enable salesperson performance. In addition, the potential mediating variable of trust was suggested to link with the leadership behaviour of coaching and salesperson performance. One sales leader (SL11) suggested that you coach to build trust, and that trust

helps the sales leader coach, and this results in increased salesperson performance. Thus, trust seems to be influenced by the predictor variable of coaching in this example. This type of 'chain link' explanation fits the mediator definition and fits with the description of mediators often being considered 'psychological properties' (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Mediators are suggested to describe the psychological process that occurs to create the relationship and, as such, are considered dynamic properties of individuals (e.g., emotions, beliefs, behaviours) (Baron and Kenny, 1986). In addition, the term mediator fits with the sales leadership literature findings, which identify trust and other variables as mediators between leadership and sales performance (Jaramillo et al., 2009; MacKenzie et al., 2001).

The next section will look at the frequency that the potential mediators are mentioned, provide a definition of the potential mediators based on feedback from the respondents, and show with illustrative quotations how they potentially mediate salesperson performance.

4.5.1 Trust

Trust was the potential mediator that was mentioned with the greatest frequency, with 59 references from the respondents. There were no explicit definitions of trust by the respondents and the interviewer did not probe for a definition. However, the sales professionals did speak at length about the construct. Often, trust was included as a potential mediator in the quotations, describing how a leadership behaviour could impact salesperson performance. In some cases, just the act of trusting the sales representatives was seen to positively impact performance. Overall, trust has great importance in sales because the sales representatives operate in a different way to other employees in the organisation. The following quotation from a sales leader describes this succinctly.

"In the end, a sales person, he owns kind of his own businesses. He has a territory and within that territory he makes the decision of how he is going to go towards his customers with his product and what message, and that is kind of his own business that he is running. Now he has only one person that he discusses this with and he is totally dependent on this person, and

that is the sales leader; because the sales leader can really decide whether to keep that territory, what quota will he have next year and all of these. So he needs to have a clear communication with this person. He can't fear that if he says something wrong, then suddenly the sales leader will double his quota or he will change the territory and take deals away from him, because in the end he earns commissions for doing sales within that territory. It's his career and his future within that territory. So, when the sales leader is kind of the person who can change all of that that is why it's important to have that trust". R15 SL

The importance of trust is demonstrated by the previous quotation. There was another discussion which provided an impactful story that demonstrates the importance of building trust, and how trust can act as a potential mediator to salesperson performance. This story illustrates two different approaches to creating a vision and laying out a sales territory at the beginning of the year. It describes one sales leader's approach (Mr. X) who acted in a way that did not enable salesperson trust. Under this sales leader, the team did not meet performance expectations. Then the story describes a new sales leader's approach (Mr. Y) who started the process in the same way; however, he led in a way that encouraged trust. Interestingly, this new sales leader led the team to exceptional sales performance in that division. A key implication to note in this story, is the way the new sales leader led the team using leadership behaviours, and then built trust, which then led to high performance.

"The first guy is coming to the meeting and he says this is the kick off meeting for the year, Mr. X is the first guy. He comes in and says, 'I've got a number, \$20,000,000. I've cut it up for each of you individually and I've given each one of you a 120 percent of the number, to cover for any short falls in different areas and make sure we hit the numbers as a team'. Mr. Y one year later has exactly the same meeting without knowing what happened in the meeting last year, and says, 'I've got a number which is like \$25,000,000 or whatever'. He said, 'I've cut it up, given each one of you exactly the same number, and I'm only giving you all 80 percent of

what the number is, because I'm assuming you will over deliver and we will make up the other 20 percent. I want to make sure you guys overachieve'. There was a fundamental difference; we hate the first guy because basically what he said is you're stealing money off me to make sure you get your number. Whereas, what Mr. Y did is say, I'm going to take a risk for all of you guys because I believe you're going to overachieve and I've got that much faith in you. There was a massive difference in approach!.... Trust! I trusted Mr. Y. I trust him today and if I worked for him again, I'll have trust for him, so trust is a big thing for me". R20 SR (AP)

Respondents continued to describe the contrast and discussed the link between trust and performance. The following quotations illustrate how some respondents perceived that trust can make the salesperson feel secure and more confident, and motivated to work harder.

"On the other side, trust is a very good one. Trust your guys, you hired them, so you know they're good salesperson, and they're trustworthy, and they are not in this role because they cannot do anything. Give a little bit of trust.....That's why everyone is willing to step up a little bit more, because they feel secure". R30 SR (LP)

"I mean emotionally it helps to know that you're valued and trusted and so you walk into the customer meeting with much higher level of confidence, because so much of what we do requires you to feel confident and that what you are doing is right and you're -- that you know what you're talking about etcetera. The emotional side of it, that side of it I think it's extremely important". R 24 SR (LP)

There are many examples of trust as a potential mediator of leadership behaviours and salesperson performance. An example of trust as a potential mediator of performance for the coaching and creating vision leadership behaviours:

“So, I think that the first thing (with coaching) is trust, I think if you don’t have that it’s very difficult to impact, positively impact a sales person’s performance.” R11 SL

“I was mentioning the trust that a sales person needs to build with the customers and I think also for a sales leader it is important to have this trusted relationship with the sales team and to build that with consistency in what you’re doing, leading by example (creating vision), from time to time showing the way and being kind of an image, a positive image towards the team”. R14 SL

The respondents spoke about a lack trust of the sales team at the ‘IT Company’. There were references to the lack of trust leading to micromanagement, which seems to be holding back the sales team, rather than moving the business forward. Examples of this are seen with the following quotations by a key sales leader, and a high performing sales representative.

“One thing. I mean I think the other thing that our leadership does is spend way too much time doing deal reviews. I think we really lackand this is a subject in another conversation. We lack the trust of our sales talent. We will be on four calls about the same flipping deal in a week. What’s going to change from hour one to hour two, from Monday morning to Tuesday afternoon? It in the end it breeds a culture of lack of trust and I think they need to resist second guessing themselves. Instead of asking what kind of help they can provide to move the sales cycle forward, ask what do the building materials look like? Do you see what I mean?” R10 SL

“I think the most important point is the trust issue. If he is not trusting me to do a good job, what’s the point in hiring me? Couldn’t you do the job yourself? Don’t do the deal for me and that’s also the trust”. R29 SR (HP)

Overall, the potential mediator of trust was identified with greatest frequency and emphasis. It is an important construct to include in the framework based on the data.

4.5.2 Confidence

Confidence was the potential mediator that was mentioned next with 35 references from the respondents. Again, there were no specific definitions of confidence, but many references to it. Confidence is considered key to salesperson success by the respondents, so leadership behaviours which encourage confidence, ultimately help enable salesperson performance. Respondents spoke about how different leadership behaviours potentially mediate salesperson performance as demonstrated below.

“Would it help if a sales leader was able to do behaviours that enabled confidence? 100% yeah!! That’s big. From sales there are a lot of rejections you can face from time to time, there’s a lot of losses you may have throughout the course of your career. You may lose some big deals, you may lose deals and not understand why you lost them, because you think you did everything right in the book. I guess having a good sales leader with a lot of confidence and to give you that confidence saying no, you did a great job. That can always help because there’s a lot of passion that has to be involved in it, you have to be really passionate about what you are doing to be successful”. R36 SR (HP)

“that behaviour (coaching) helps them by enhancing their level of confidence, versus questioning their skill and aptitude”. R3 SR (HP)

“So again I think that makes a good manager, because they are showing interest in you as an individual. You as the person doing that role and what your abilities are like beyond what you are currently doing, and just again gives you more confidence in what you could be doing; as well as to what you actually are doing” R9 SR HP.

Confidence is key in sales. Leadership behaviours can enhance confidence, and thus potentially mediate and lead to enhanced performance.

4.5.3 Optimism

Optimism was mentioned 16 times by the respondents. An example of this construct was defined is illustrated in the quotation below:

“You want to be optimistic about things. You want to see chances and opportunities, see the opportunities and not see the down side of things”. R29 SR (HP)

Optimism is linked to salesperson performance as explained in the high performing sales representative’s quotation below.

“being a sales person you need to be motivated at all times, and you need to be always in a mode that you are eventually going to get what you want, optimism is number one for every successful person”. R27 SR (AP)

While there were not as many references to this construct as the others, it is worth considering as a potential mediator.

4.5.4 Resilience

Resilience was the potential mediator that was mentioned the least, only 9 times, yet it was mentioned with strong intensity. The definition is outlined in the quotations provided from the sales representatives below:

“you have to be able to carry that thing forward and you know, be wanting to come back the next day and start again and try again. So it takes a lot of resilience and I think a big part of it is, for a sales manager to be feeding that energy to people, so that they are convinced they are doing the right things”. R3 SR (HP)

“It’s about picking them up a little bit from the negative perspective, and trying to build that out and trying to get them back to a position where they can actually do what they do best”. R6 SR (LP)

To express the relationship of how the potential mediating impact may occur, the quotation below suggests the impact of how a sales leader may use the coaching leader behaviour to build resilience, and ultimately salesperson performance.

“I’m in sales. I have lost more deals than I have won and that’s part of the job... you just need to refocus and think about new opportunities and think about how can we bounce back from this? How can we bounce from this account after this happened? R29 SR (HP)

The above mentioned potential mediators of trust, confident, optimism and resilience are important to consider when leading salespeople. The next section will introduce a sales leadership framework, based on the findings identified in the data on what leadership behaviours and potential mediators are perceived to enable salesperson performance.

4.6 Introduction to a Sales Leadership Framework

Results of this analysis reveal specific sales leadership behaviours, which are perceived to enable salesperson performance, forming the basis of a sales leadership framework. Thus, the transformational leadership theory is extended to include specific leadership behaviours relevant to the sales context.

The sales leadership framework that emerged from the data is presented in Figure 4-3. This framework summarises the coded data responses collected from sales professionals as they spoke about their perceptions and lived experiences of sales leadership. In the framework, the leadership behaviours identified by the respondents are coaching, collaborating, championing, customer engaging, challenging, creating vision, inspiring, rewarding and candidate recruiting. The impact of these sales leadership behaviours on salesperson performance is potentially mediated by trust, confidence, optimism and resilience. Candidate recruiting acts differently to other forms of sales leadership behaviours on salesperson performance. While effective recruiting of excellent sales representative candidates was perceived as enabling salesperson performance, it is not a behaviour that acts on the current sales representatives and is therefore

not mediated in the same way. Essentially the framework suggests that the leadership behaviours identified by the respondents may, through mediating variables, act to enable salesperson performance.

Descriptions of the leadership behaviours, mediators and salesperson performance measures will be provided in Figures 4-4 & 4-5. Examples of quotations from the semi-structured interviews for the most referenced leadership behaviours are also provided below in Table 4-2.

Framework of Sales Leadership Behaviours

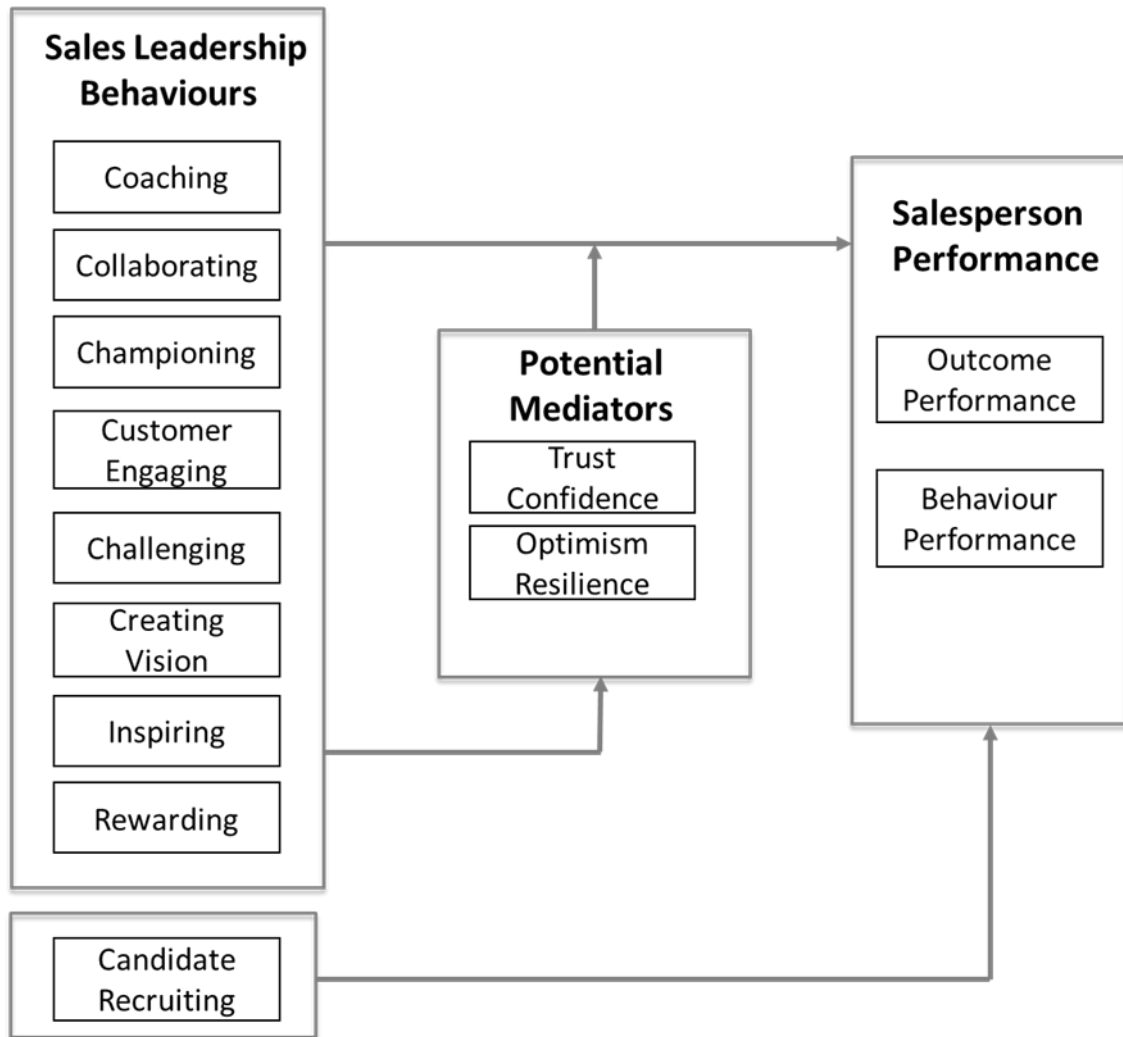


Figure 4-3 Framework of sales leadership behaviours

SALES LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS

New Sales Leadership Behaviours Identified

Collaborating	Encourages the sales team to work collaboratively to realise shared & individual sales goals
Championing	Intervenes to keep indirect managers & repetitive internal processes from interfering with sales focus
Customer Engagement	Supports the sales process by engaging with customers
Candidate Recruiting	Builds an effective recruitment process

Transformational Leadership Behaviours Identified

Coaching	Coaches to help salespeople improve performance through individualised 'hands on' assistance
Challenging	Encourages new ideas & problem solving
Creating Vision	Communicates an inspiring vision of the future
Inspiring	Generates excitement and motivation in sales team

Transactional Leadership Behaviour Identified

Rewarding	Provides rewards/recognition when targets are met
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Figure 4-4 Descriptions of sales leadership behaviours

SALES LEADERSHIP MEDIATORS

Trust	A trusting relationship between salesperson & sales leader
Confidence	The belief that one has the ability to achieve a specified task
Optimism	Viewing situations from a positive light and having positive expectations about the future
Resilience	The ability to recover from challenging situations (e.g., loss of a sale)

SALESPERSON PERFORMANCE

Outcome Performance	The salesperson meets and surpasses sales targets
Behaviour Performance	The salesperson meets behavioural related tasks and improves performance

Figure 4-5 Descriptions of potential mediators and salesperson performance

Table 4-2 Top sales leadership behaviours, quotations by sales leaders and sales representatives

Sales Leader Behaviour	Definition	Link to Salesperson Performance	Sales Leader Citation (examples)	Sales Rep Citation (examples)
Coaching	Helps salespeople recognise opportunities to improve performance through individualised coaching, & coaching the sales process	Assistance to performance	<i>"I believe they should use a coaching attitude – a coaching attitude is the ability to ask questions and help the person find their own way and apply their own change theories it is more powerful than only telling or mentoring the sales guys" R1</i>	<i>"the right coaching questions would probably also be possible.... I have this notion that I actually have got the answers myself, I just need the right questions to answer". R22</i>
Collaborating	Facilitates and encourages the sales team to work collaboratively to realise shared and individual sales goals.	Collaboratively sharing ideas and problem solving for performance	<i>"I let him present his tier one customers to a group of people ie management and let them build a business case.... why I am doing this is because if you are sitting side by side with 6 people discussing the sales cycle you always get the brilliant ideas. The one guy says you have to try this, the other says, "I have a relative working at this company," and the third says there are all kinds of relations there." R13</i>	<i>"So it's critical to bring it back to the office.... to look at problems, and it's great to have the help to figure it out because you can't possibly engage with the customer as a power one, you need that intellectual power force in your team to be able to solve the problems, be able to come up with that insight to be able to advise the client". R4</i>
Championing	Intervenes to keep indirect managers from interfering with salespersons focus on revenue generation to improve performance	Focus and execution for performance	<i>"a leader should be strong enough to rise above the pressure, and protect his team from the pressure of the boat I call this umbrella management. He has to play the role of the umbrella to protect his team from the corporate noise and pressure, forecast pressure from regional presidents. Make sure his team keeps on working based on quality and trust and do not discount for the sake of discount." R1</i>	<i>"It's air cover, keeping noise away from frontline sales people so that I can focus on executing sales deals as opposed to being dragged into more operational issues" R8</i>
Customer Engaging	Supports the sales process with customer	Customer engagement for performance	<i>We need to get out there and help us build a sales line in places that we aren't already. At the 'IT Company' as you probably know 80% of</i>	<i>"At a customer meeting and he would lead by example...you've got a sales leader that you trust within your area. You can in fact</i>

Sales Leader Behaviour	Definition	Link to Salesperson Performance	Sales Leader Citation (examples)	Sales Rep Citation (examples)
	engagement to help progress sales deals and develop customer relationships to enable salesperson performance		<i>our business comes from 20% of our clients. We need our sales leadership including myself to be out there, going to meetings at SCOs and CIOs and CEOs. Get out there, talk to board members of companies that we don't do business with or we do. Partner relationships. Keep that going and start focusing in this Vice President of the sales. Get out there and get us known and branded better in the community, such that we can drive more sales". R10</i>	<i>bring him in in front of a CFO, CIO, CEO, and you know he will do well. He will not embarrass you, he will not say something that's totally out of concept. Someone who can actually state stuff that I as a sales guy can state equally well, but coming from the sales leader it will have a different impact on the customer". R21</i>
Challenging	Encourages new idea development, new approaches to solve problems and develop creative customer solutions	Generation of new ideas for performance	<i>I would expect from a great leader to create that space for his team to be able to step back, reflect, and look at what might be improved...that would be in today's environment one of the most critical aspects of a great leader. R1</i>	<i>"I learned from him about constructive tension and it's good to have that sometimes... he would use that (constructive tension) on the team, and he would use it on individuals in the team and collectively as a team. Definitely, absolutely cool, I'm probably stumbling over something now which probably I haven't really thought about but, definitely, that was one of his traits. And it wasn't necessarily to catch people up, it was to generate new ideas" R21</i>
Creating Vision	Communicates a shared vision of the future for sales team and customers.	Visioning for performance	<i>"They have to OWN the strategy and Communicate the strategy and talk about the why. The strategy sets a straight line. I mean it's super important".R16</i>	<i>"you set strategy and make sure everyone knows what they are doing" R7</i>

Sales Leader Behaviour	Definition	Link to Salesperson Performance	Sales Leader Citation (examples)	Sales Rep Citation (examples)
Candidate Recruiting	Builds an effective recruitment process	Selection for performance	<i>"If you don't hire the right people you are not going to get the right results. So why not spend a little more time on the interviewing process and capability and sales experience, industry dollars, and you will likely have less turnover. I believe in that strongly". R10</i>	<i>"Okay, in order for us to grow, always hire someone who is better than you. Don't hire someone who is not as good as you or is worse than you. Always hire someone who is better than you and create a team who is better than you. You don't need to be the best at everything. You need to create a team. You need to manage them and that's the way we can grow." R30</i>
Inspiring	Communicates with enthusiasm, excitement and conviction	Inspiration for performance	<i>"On Monday morning, I talk about success because I'm building on the positive not on the negative. So, I talk about success, about someone who has sold even a \$10k deal last week. Everybody in the team says 'hey congratulations'. People are very motivated...that's the way I lead and that's the way I intend to lead" R10</i>	<i>"he brings an element of passion to the role that the other two guys before him never had...he's so passionate about the product, he's so passionate about the messaging, he wants all of us to be at the top of our game. He wants us to bring out the best for customers. What I'm trying to say is that, he's sort of inspires me, even" R21</i>
Rewarding	Provides rewards and recognition when levels of performance are achieved	Reward for performance	<i>"You get respect that you are on stage during the quarter meeting...(after you make your numbers)" R13</i>	<i>"They can also incentivise, so what we would do is, if you close a deal in the first month of the quarter and then you get 150% commission paid on the deal. That is a reward, how the leaders enable sales." R34</i>

4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, overall findings of the sales professional's perceptions and experiences of sales leadership were presented. Many stories and ideas based on lived experiences were presented from the respondents. The chapter began with an introduction on the context of the modern sales environment and the theme of quarterly pressure was identified. There was a focus on references to leadership behaviours to help group and structure the findings. The main findings were presented, based on these references. Firstly, leadership behaviours were identified and discussed. They were introduced and data were provided to demonstrate the importance of each behaviour, the definition of each behaviour and the link to performance. Second, potential mediators were identified and discussed. They were presented in a similar way to the leadership behaviours. Third, the sales leadership behaviour framework was presented (this framework will be developed further in Chapter 6) and framework definitions were provided. An example of data associated with the leadership behaviours were also presented.

Reviewing the results of the study revealed many similarities, and notable differences in perceptions of sales leaders and sales representatives. Differences and similarities in perceptions of high, average and low performing sales representatives were identified. These differences and similarities will now be discussed in Part 2 of the Findings in Chapter 5.

5 FINDINGS – PART 2

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the overall findings that will be compared and contrasted by sales leaders, sales representatives, and further by sales representatives' performance. In Section 5.2 an overall comparison of perceptions of sales leaders' and sales representatives' is presented. In Section 5.3, findings on the most referenced leadership behaviours and potential mediators will be compared from the sales leader and sales representatives' perspectives. In Section 5.4, findings from high, average and low performing sales representatives will be compared. The chapter is summarised in Section 5.5.

5.2 Comparison of perceptions of sales leaders and sales representatives

A detailed analysis revealed interesting differences and similarities between sales leaders and sales representatives that will now be discussed.

Overall, sales leaders made more statements about references to leadership behaviours perceived to enhance salesperson performance than sales representatives. On average, sales leaders referenced leadership behaviours that enable salesperson performance 39% more than sales representatives.

The sales leaders and sales representatives in the sample, generally had high agreement on what leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance. Four out of nine leadership behaviours mentioned were consistent in terms of overall frequency of mention and order of importance. The top four behaviours of coaching, collaborating, championing and customer engaging represented 84% of total sales representatives' references and 79% of total sales leaders' references. This is illustrated by Figure 5-1 below.

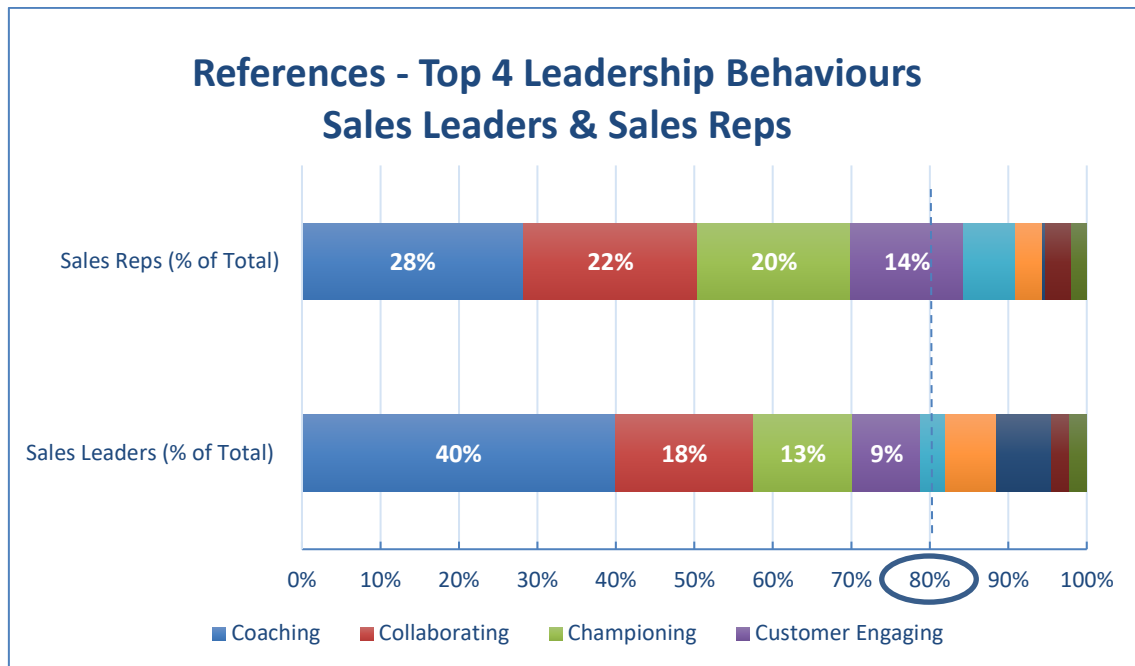


Figure 5-1 References to the top leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance by sales leaders and sales representatives

An interesting finding is the top 4 referenced leadership behaviours were presented in the same order of importance for both sales leaders and sales representatives, however there were differences in frequency of mention. Sales leaders spent more of their interview time discussing coaching; referencing this behaviour 42% more often than sales representatives (40% total interview time versus 28% of total interview time for sales representatives). While coaching was also the most frequently referenced behaviour for sales representatives; these respondents spent more of their interview time talking about championing, customer-engaging, and challenging (56% of total interview time versus 39% of total interview time for sales leaders). In the semi-structured interviews, sales representatives referred to collaborating, championing and customer engaging more frequently than sales leaders by 27%, 54% and 65% respectively.

The 5th most referenced leadership behaviour by sales leaders was candidate recruiting. Sales leaders spent 7% of the interview time discussing candidate recruiting, versus a near 0% mention of this behaviour by sales representatives.

The 5th most referenced leadership behaviour by sales representatives is the challenging leadership behaviour (7th most mentioned by sales leaders). Sales representatives spoke more about the challenging behaviour, referencing this behaviour 114% more than the sales leaders.

There was agreement on the 6th most mentioned leadership behaviour of creating vision, although sales leaders referenced this 84% more in the semi-structured interviews than sales representatives (referenced 7% versus 4%).

It is notable that the rewarding leadership behaviour was mentioned the least by sales leaders and second least by sales representatives, both equally 2% of total interview references.

Table 5-1 presents a summary of the total references to leadership behaviours by sales leaders and sales representatives.

Table 5-1 Comparison of pattern of responses between sales leaders and sales representatives

<i>Leadership Behaviours</i>	<i>Sales Leaders References (N=781), (n=12)</i>	<i>Sales Leaders (% of Total)</i>	<i>Per Sales Leader</i>	<i>Sales Reps References (N=1127), (n=24)</i>	<i>Sales Reps (% of Total)</i>	<i>Per Sales Rep</i>
Coaching	312	40%	26	318	28%	13
Collaborating	137	18%	11	250	22%	10
Championing	99	13%	8	220	20%	9
Customer Engaging	68	9%	6	162	14%	7
Challenging	24	3%	2	74	7%	3
Creating Vision	51	7%	4	40	4%	2
Candidate Recruiting	55	7%	5	4	0%	0
Inspiring	18	2%	2	37	3%	2
Rewarding	17	2%	1	22	2%	1

To enable visualisation of the comparison, results are also presented in Figure 5-2. To compare and contrast the pattern of responses, a percentage of total responses is presented by sales leaders and sales representatives (Figure 5-3) below. This graph illustrates visually the differences that emerged in the

frequency the sales leaders and sales representatives spoke about the enabling leadership behaviours.

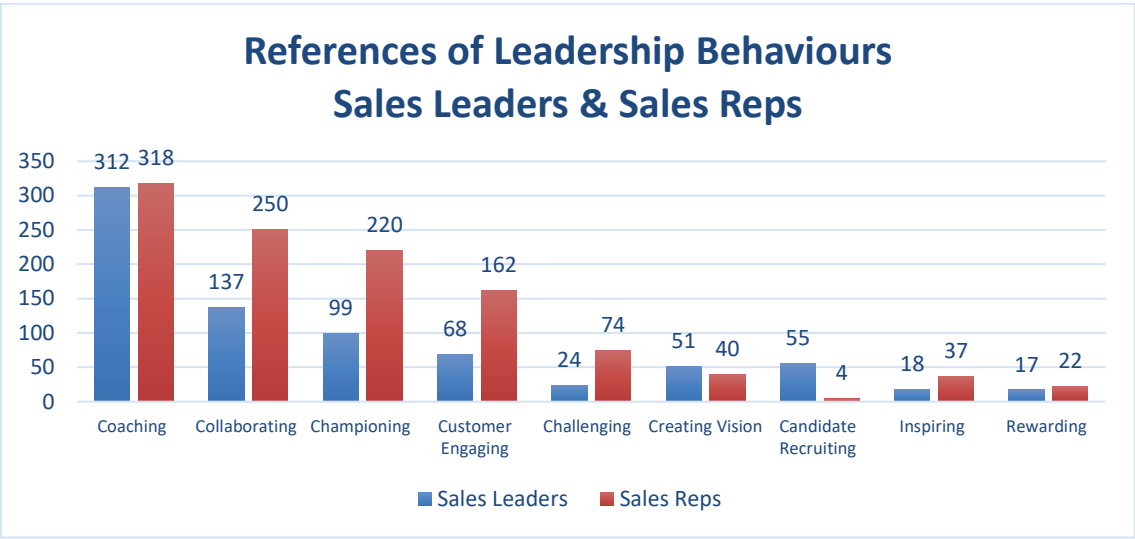


Figure 5-2 Comparison of sales leaders & sales representatives, total references to leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance

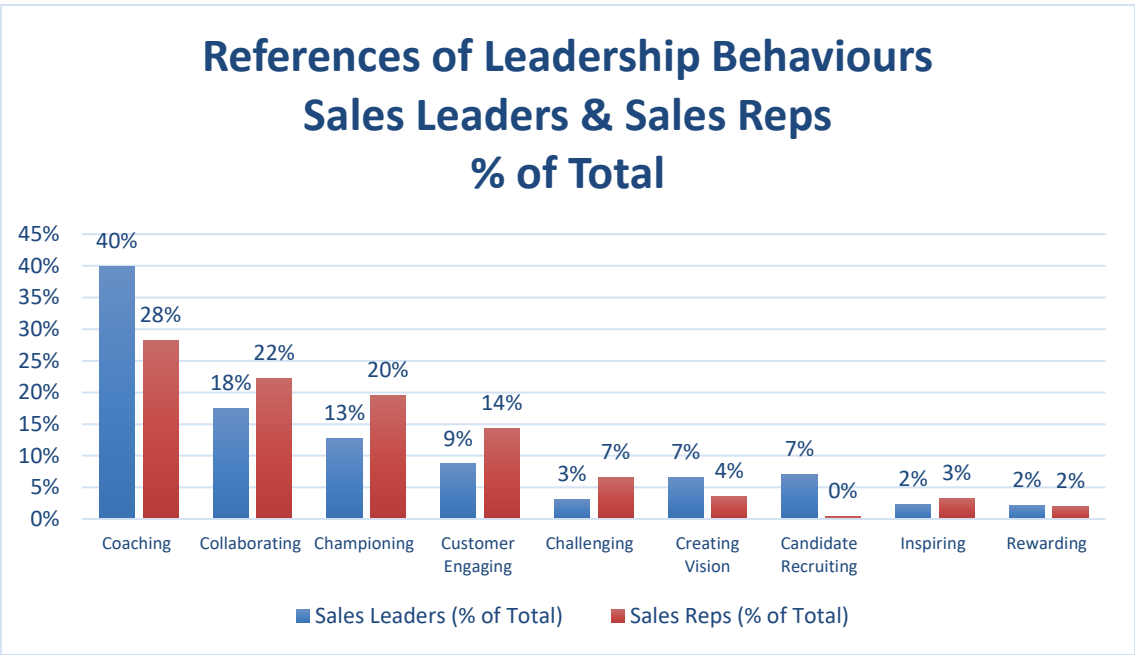


Figure 5-3 Comparison of sales leaders and sales representatives, percent of total references to leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance

To illustrate the differences and similarities, pie chart graphs are also presented in Figure 5-4 for the sales leaders and Figure 5-5 for the sales representatives

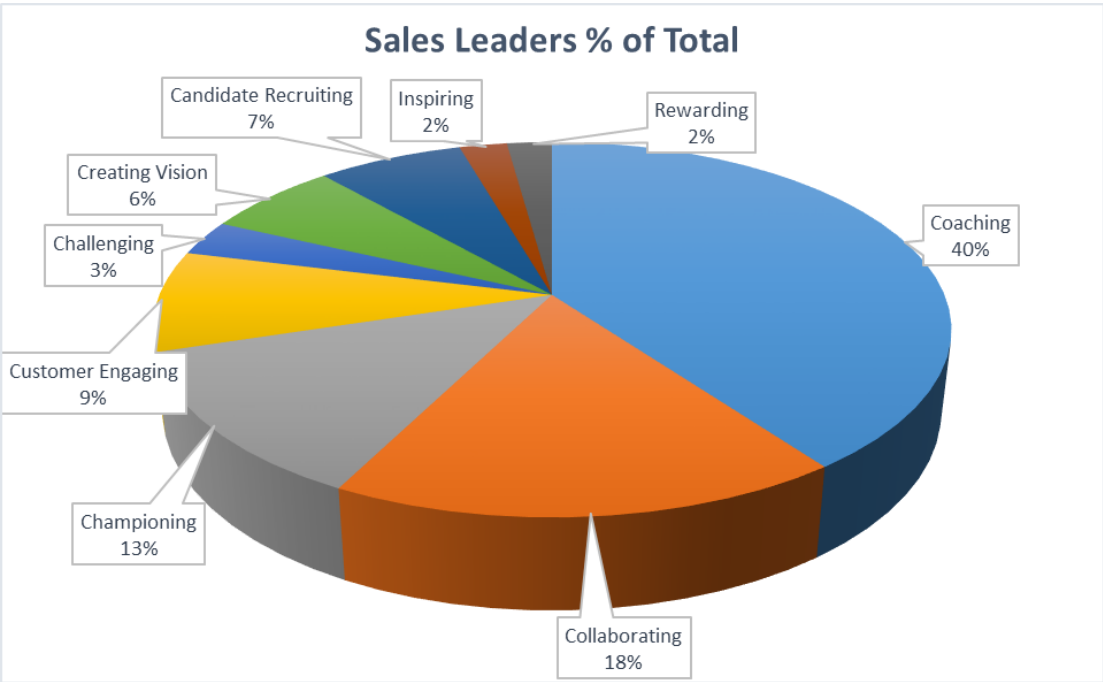


Figure 5-4 Sales leaders references to leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance

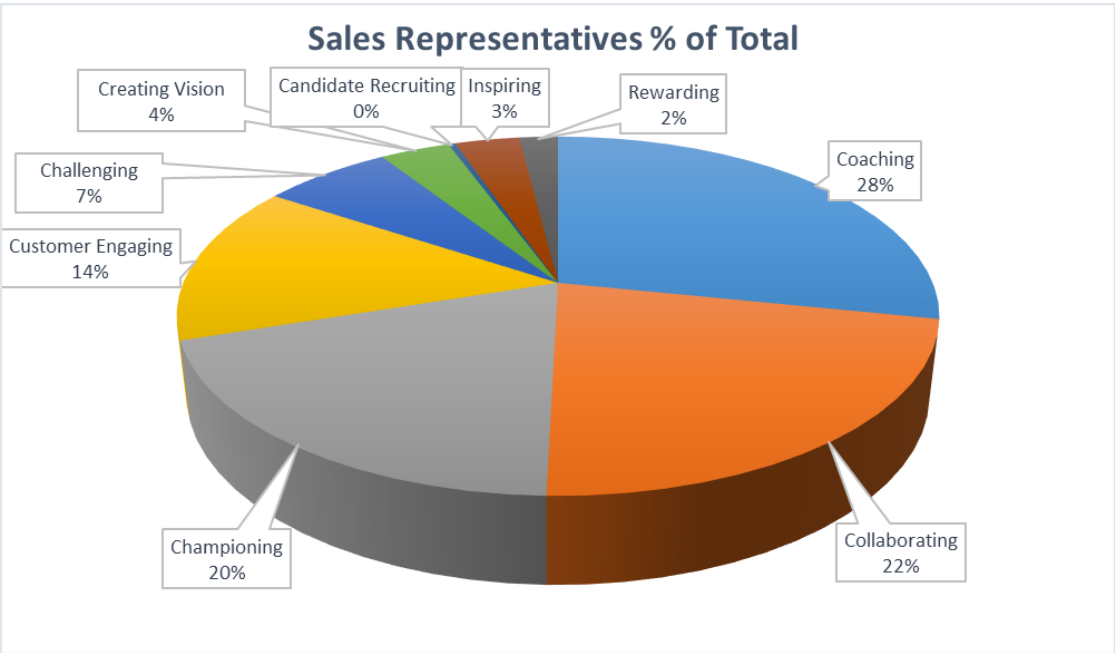


Figure 5-5 Sales representatives references to leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance

While sales leaders highlighted coaching as the most referenced leadership behaviour, their responses were not as concentrated in the top 4 leadership behaviour categories as the sales representatives' responses. The patterns of leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance by sales leaders and sales representatives has provided interesting insights.

In the next section, differences and similarities between sales leaders and sales representatives in coaching, collaborating, championing, customer engaging, challenging and candidate recruiting, as well as potential mediators will be discussed in detail.

5.3 Differences and similarities in leadership behaviours and potential mediators

Differences and similarities in specific leadership behaviours identified and emphasised were found, and will now be discussed in more detail.

5.3.1 Coaching

The coaching behaviour was the most frequently referenced leader behaviour by all respondents. A noticeable difference is that the sales leaders spoke with greater reference, and greater emphasis to coaching than the sales representatives, as can be seen in Table 5-1 and Figure 5-2.

When considering respondent references per sales leader and per sales representative, sales leaders referenced coaching almost twice as much (96%) as the sales representatives (Figure 5-8). The data indicates that sales leaders in this research are aware of the importance of coaching and have good intentions to use this behaviour to enhance salesperson performance. The sales leaders identified that the short-term focus of the business on driving quarterly results, makes the implementation of this behaviour challenging. It was also apparent that there had been little training or actual coaching for the sales leaders themselves based on the data, and this may be required to enable implementation of coaching.

The sales representatives also referred most to the coaching leadership behaviour as a behaviour that would enable salesperson performance. In contrast to the sales leaders, the sales representatives spent a larger portion of their time speaking of other leadership behaviours. While they identified the importance of coaching and spoke most frequently about this behaviour, they also spoke at greater length about the behaviours of collaborating, customer engaging, championing and challenging.

Coaching Themes, Individualised Coaching and Coaching the Sales Process

In the coding process relating to the coaching leadership behaviour, two themes were identified of 1) individualised coaching (personal coaching), and 2) coaching the sales process. These themes were identified by both sales representatives and sales leaders as illustrated in the chart below (Figure 5-6).

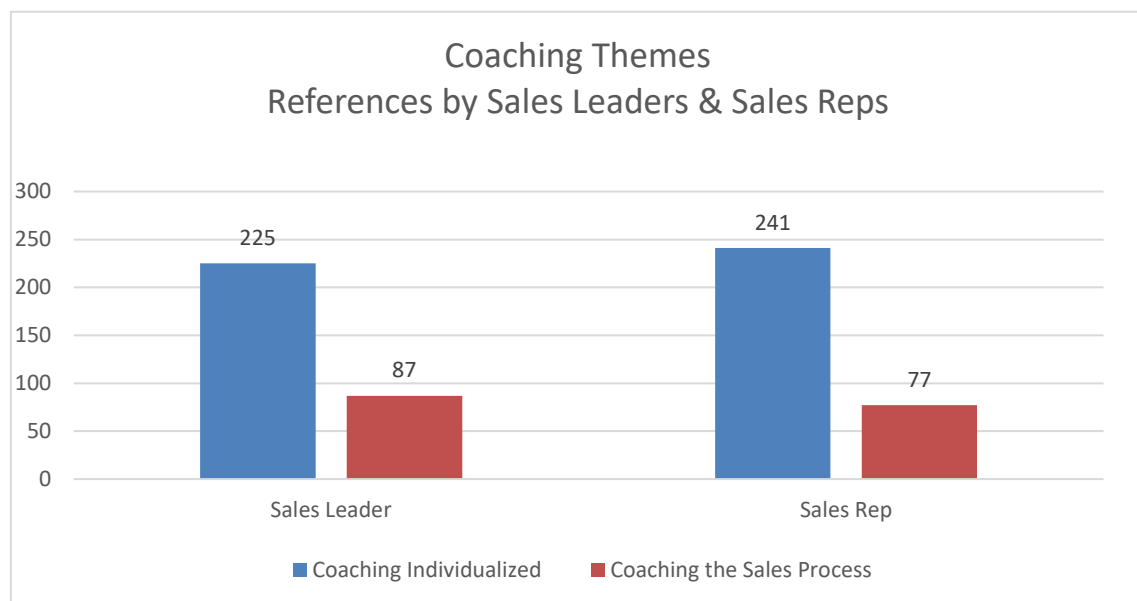


Figure 5-6 Coaching themes referenced by sales leaders and sales representatives

It is noticeable that both set of respondents spoke about each theme with a similar pattern, speaking with approximately 3 times a greater frequency about the importance of 'coaching the individual', over 'coaching the sales process'.

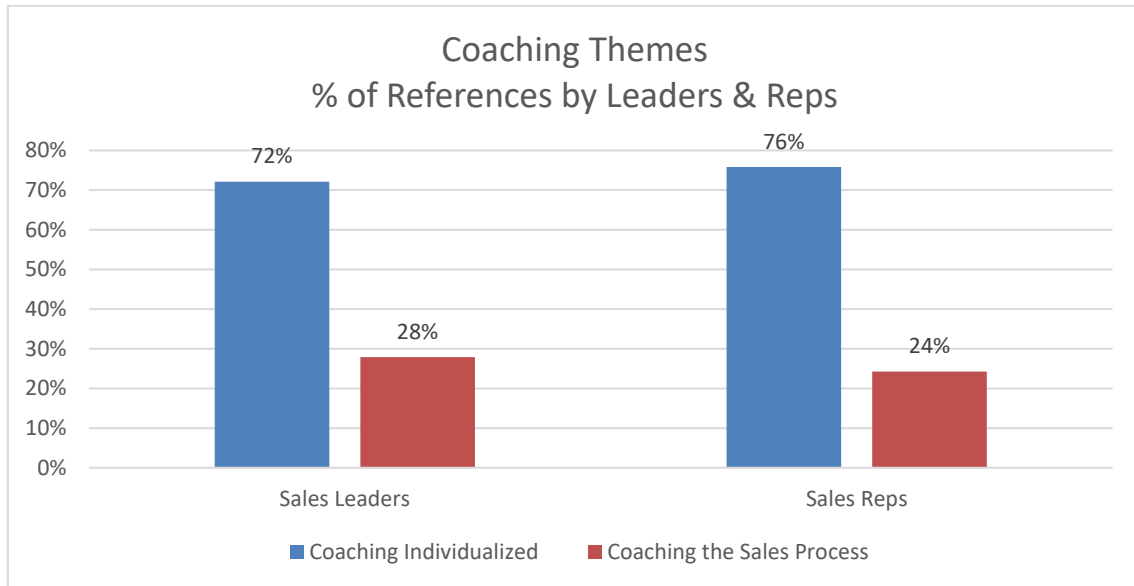


Figure 5-7 Coaching themes percent of references by sales leaders and sales representatives

While the frequency of coaching individualised vs coaching the sales process appears similar for the sales leaders and sales representatives, when adjusting for sample size to determine average references per sales leader and sales representative, the average reference of 'individualised coaching' and 'coaching the sales process' is 87% higher for individualised coaching and 126% higher for coaching the sales process for sales leaders' vs sales representatives. (Figure 5-7 and Figure 5-8).

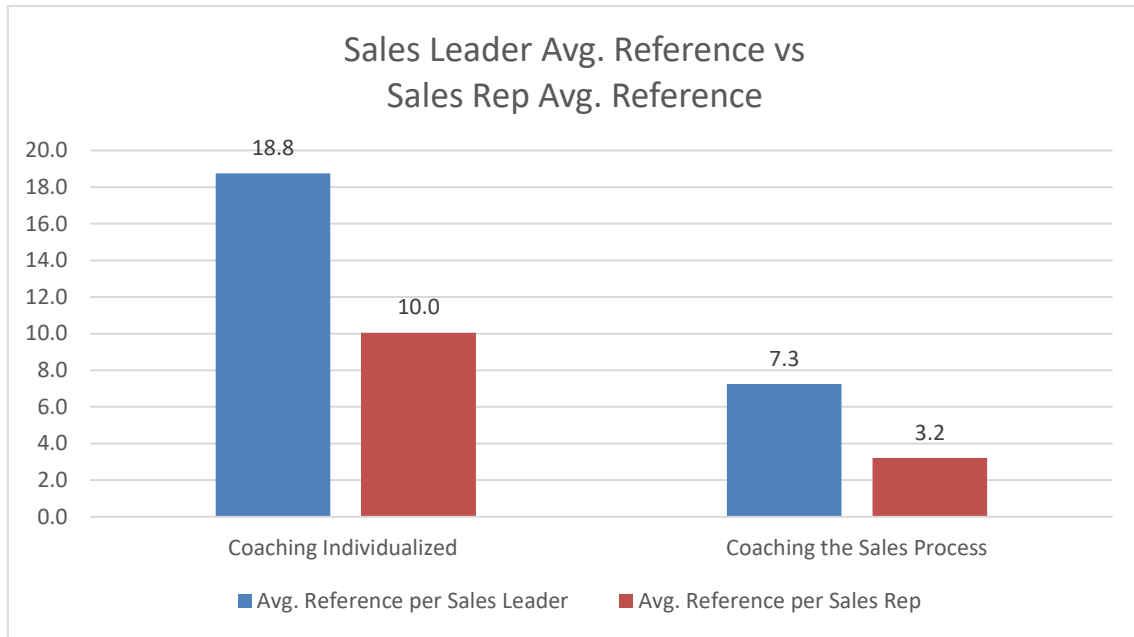


Figure 5-8 Coaching themes, average references per sales leader and sales representative

Both sets of respondents suggested that coaching the sales process was a behaviour that was being utilised at the IT Company; however, there appears to be an identified need for more individualised personal coaching to occur at the IT Company and within the sales industry.

Coaching Individualised (Personal Coaching)

While the individualised coaching subcategory was identified by both sales leaders and sales representatives, differences in emphasis about elements of this behaviour existed between the two groups. The sales leaders spoke at greater length and with greater emphasis about the topic. The 12 sales leaders made 225 references in total to this topic, while 24 of the sales representatives made 241 references in total regarding the importance of individualised coaching. On average sales leaders referred to individualised coaching 87% more often than sales representatives. Sales leaders had strong insights about this behaviour of individualised (personal) coaching and spoke about the importance of listening actively when coaching, and not telling. They spoke about using individualised coaching as an avenue to build trust with sales representatives, and suggested

that coaching questions be proposed to ask what the sales representatives want to be coached on, using coaching questions to encourage self-coaching to occur.

Under this category, several ideas emerged from the sales representatives. Sales representatives discussed how regular coaching sessions could be helpful to achieving improved results. They identified that in these sessions they wanted to bring their own individual perceptions and ideas to the coaching session. They suggested they would prefer a sales leader who listened actively and did not tell. The sales representatives suggested that leaders who coached to get people to think differently, using an empathetic approach and asking coaching questions, will be the sales leaders who enable salesperson performance. They also discussed how they preferred leaders who coached to help jointly solve problems.

The following sales representatives' quotations illustrates that using an individualised personal coaching approach, where the leader demonstrates understanding of the salesperson, is valued by the sales representatives as a leadership behaviour and is perceived to enable salesperson performance:

"The hard learning is in the field, your core job, and the soft stuff is the guidance and how we tailor that to ensure that you get the best advice possible to help you do your job better". R21 SR (HP)

*"Some people don't like it and want to be left alone, other people need to be mentored, coached and **it's being able to adapt to that and understand what is actually required from the individual** ... to help from their perspective, how to tune into individual strengths and weaknesses and help them along their path if you like". R6 SR (LP)*

Another interesting difference that was identified was about the importance of understanding the sales person. While the sales representatives spoke at length about the importance of sales leaders understanding the salesperson (24 references), this theme was not discussed at all by the sales leaders. Demonstrating an understanding, the salesperson could be an area for sales

leaders to consider when using the coaching behaviour. Two sales representatives expressed this idea with the following quotations:

“So sales leaders who are good in terms of understanding what draws and motivates the individual sales people and adapting the conversation and the engagement around them”. R7 SR (LP)

“Summary would be somebody who takes the time to understand where these sales people are at, not just the accounts level but understanding... What are they missing? Where are they at? Where are they experiencing difficulties? ... So, it's really about understanding where are they struggling, why are they struggling and what can be done in order to help them.....so again, this is all about people interaction. Who do you sell to, when you are selling? You are selling to a person, you are not selling to an organisation. It's extremely important that we look at it from that perspective, as well. So, you have to enable and give ammunition to your people, not just in the form of self-flatter and technical things, but also from an emotional capital perspective, if you will, alright? And I think it's important for a sales manager to understand which profile of sales people they are dealing with”. R3 SR (HP)

While ‘understanding the sales representative’ was viewed as important by the sales representatives, sales leaders spoke more frequently on the importance of developmental coaching (career coaching). There were frequent responses to the need for career development coaching sessions in this environment; however it seems the voice on this was primarily from the sales leaders. For example, there were 83 references to developmental coaching from 11 sales leaders, vs. 22 references to developmental coaching from 9 sales representatives. While the sales representatives did not speak about development coaching to the same extent as the sales leaders, there were discussions from some top performing sales representatives about the concern that their career development may be held back due to their current sales success. This suggests that the sales leaders may be correct to emphasise and refer to development coaching. For example

some top performing sales representatives stated the following regarding career development and the importance of coaching to this element:

“One way to keep this performance of sales people to stay, is to coach and then help them understand what (career) possibilities there are within the sales area” R22 SR (HP)

“And I think, this is also very important, because in my mind this also is what drive people out of sales jobs is, sales people are driven by target, if they come into a job without a target. What’s after this job for me? What’s my next target? What will take me to my next stop? What is my next stop and so forth? They won’t maybe use motivation overtime. So it’s important also that other organisational structure, there’s a clear view of what’s next best for a sales person. I am not going to ask you to be selling all your life, as long as you are in this company or if you are a good guy, or a good sales person, or a good sales lady, what does it look like for you in your personal career?” R3 SR (HP)

Coaching the Sales Process

While the sales leaders spoke about coaching the sales process, 9 leaders made 87 references, vs 16 sales representatives making 77 references to this theme. Within coaching the sales process, 2 sub themes emerged from the data; coaching the ‘art of sales’ and coaching ‘the science of sales’ as described by one of the respondents. These were then termed ‘coaching the customer engagement’ and ‘coaching by metrics’.

Coaching the Sales Process Sub Themes, ‘Coaching the Customer Engagement’ and ‘Coaching by Metrics’

When analysing the data, it was found that on average, the sales representatives referred slightly more to coaching the customer engagement than the sales leaders. It was found that the sales representatives made 47 references to coaching on customer engagement and client opportunities, representing 61% of the references. Other references were coded into the nodes coaching the sales

territory, coaching the customer deal, and managing the loss (of client opportunities). Overall, the sales representatives spoke about more topics in the category of coaching the customer engagement, vs the sales leaders who referred to this sub theme 22 times and focused primarily on coaching the customer deal.

The sales leaders spoke at length about metric coaching, using leading and lagging indicators as a vehicle to coach. The sales leaders referred to this sub theme 65 times (75%) with coaching using metrics such as leading and lagging indicators, and coaching by activity being the top referenced nodes. Interestingly, the sales representatives only spoke about this sub-theme 27 times (35%) with a key focus on coaching sales territory and quota, and only 4 references regarding coaching with leading and lagging indicators were discussed from only one sales representative.

Figures 5-9 and 5-10 below show the patterns of responses regarding the ‘coaching the customer engagement’ and ‘coaching by metrics’ sub themes.

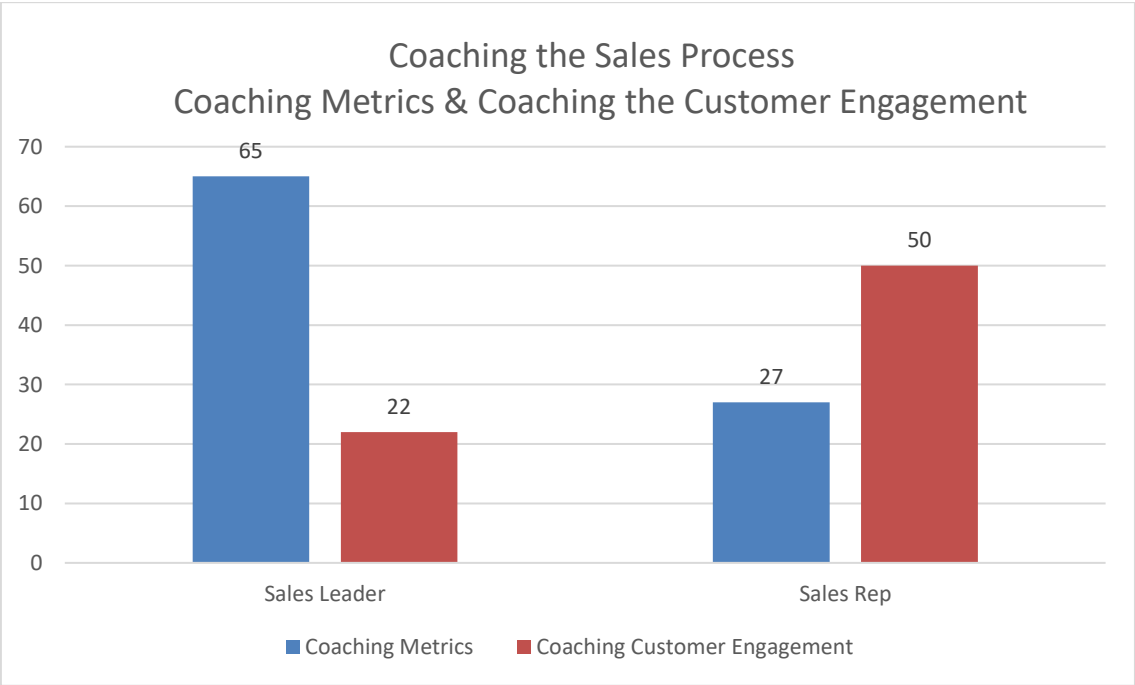


Figure 5-9 Coaching the sales process themes, comparison by sales leaders and sales representatives

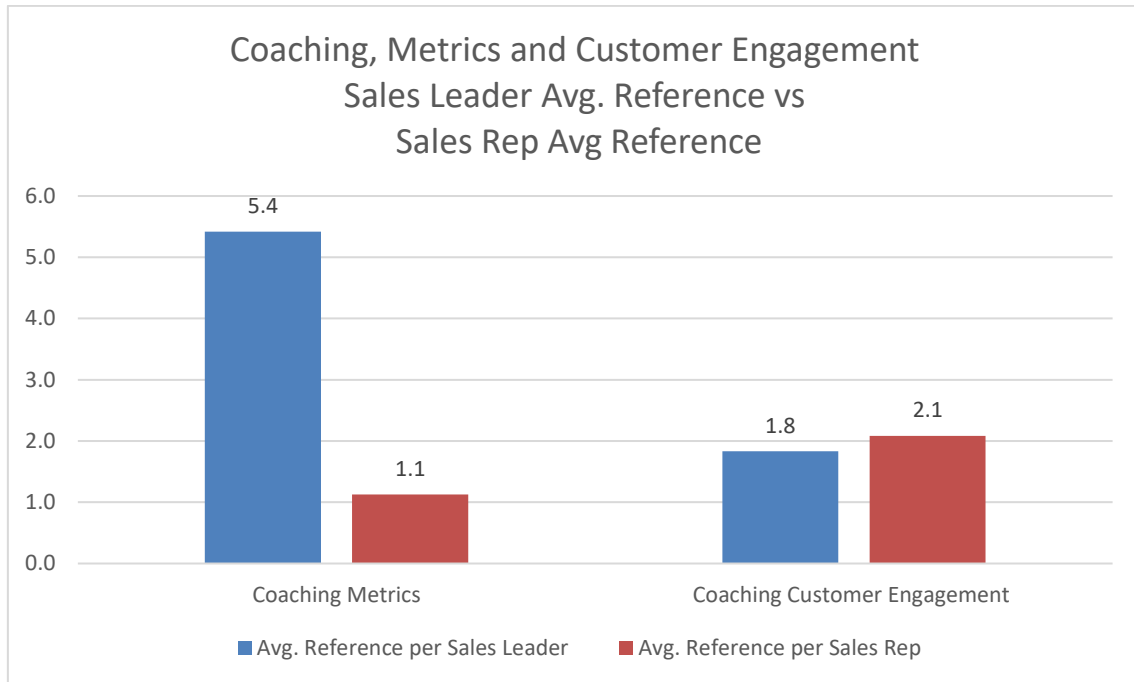


Figure 5-10 Coaching sub themes, coaching metrics and coaching customer engagement by average sales leader reference vs average sales representative reference

Coaching was referred to most frequently by both sales leaders and sales representatives. There seem to be strong perceptions that this is a leadership behaviour which should be further explored and utilised in relation to salesperson performance.

5.3.2 Collaborating

When comparing the frequency of response identified from sales leaders and sales representatives, key observations become apparent. Firstly, the importance of this behaviour was identified by both groups of respondents. Second, the focus on the importance of theme of ‘facilitation of collaboration’ is highlighted. Third, there was less emphasis on ‘encouraging collaboration’ from the sales representatives than the sales leaders.

The charts below show the breakdown of the patterns of responses from the sales leaders and sales representatives on themes of the collaboration behaviour (Figure 5-11 & 5-12).

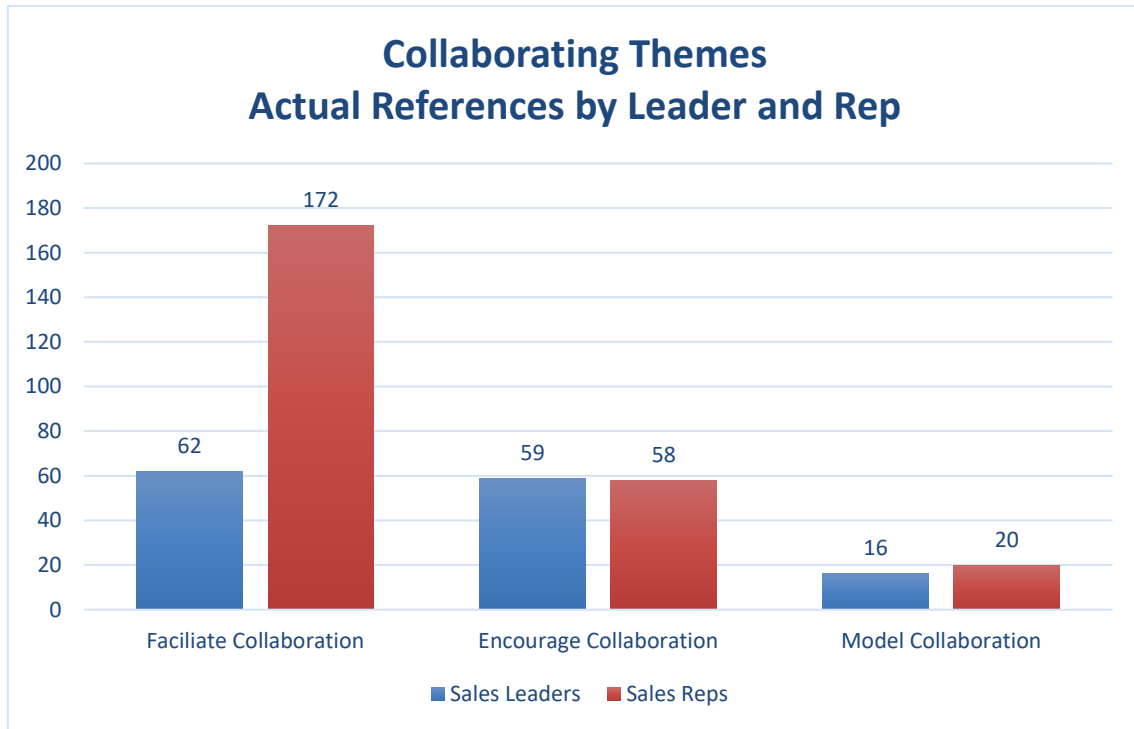


Figure 5-11 Collaborating themes by sales leaders and sales representatives

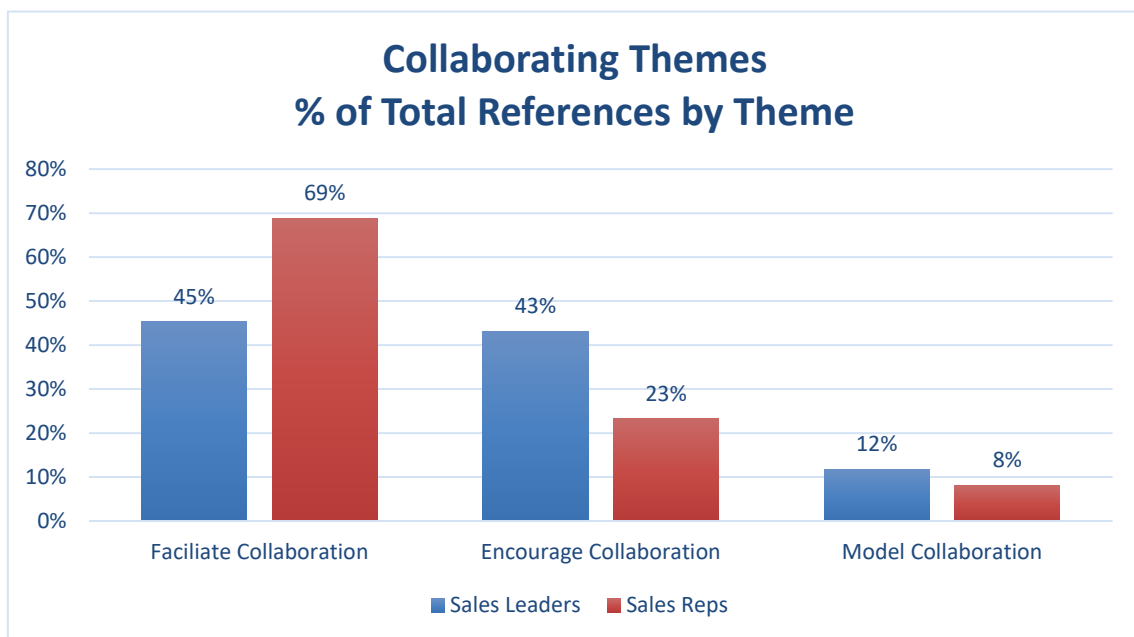


Figure 5-12 Collaborating themes percent of total by sales leaders and sales representatives

The sales representatives' pattern of responses seem to indicate that they value when the sales leader facilitates collaboration, more than encouraging and

modelling this behaviour. Perhaps this is because the sales representatives recognise the importance of the behaviour, and don't feel they need as much encouragement as the sales leaders suggest. Perhaps the reason the sales leaders feel encouraging is more important is because the sales leaders need to encourage the high performing representatives to collaborate to help the average and low performing representatives. Also, the pattern of responses indicate that modelling collaboration is a recognised subcategory or theme; however, this seems to rank less in importance to facilitating and encouraging with both sets of respondents.

An absence of collaboration at the sales executive leadership level was identified by the sales leaders. However, the sales representatives identified that it was occurring with the sales representatives and sales leaders. The concern about collaborating at the executive sales leader level is highlighted in the quotation below by a sales leader.

"The sharing of practices at the sales management levels doesn't really happen a lot...yeah, I think the sales manager should do more effort in sharing the learnings that they are getting from their team, right, like I'm in Asia and when I have a conversation with my sales manager on a global level, it's about the numbers and about planning to future numbers. I don't have conversations about, well, how did my colleague go when you were in the Europe? What were the challenges? What were the strengths, weaknesses? What can I learn from them?" R2 SL

The collaborating leadership behaviour is presented as a new construct to consider in sales leadership. With the increased demands for collaboration in the sales industry (Ingram et al., 2005), and based on the feedback of respondents in this study, it seems that a leadership behaviour in relation to collaboration may help enable salesperson performance.

5.3.3 Championing

Some differences in perceptions were identified that relate to differences in interpretation, identification and emphasis of specific leadership behaviours.

With the leader behaviour 'championing', the first finding was the existence and requirement for the behaviour. The second interesting finding about the 'championing' leadership behaviour is that throughout the data, this was interpreted as 'protecting' by followers, and interpreted as 'sales enabling' by the leaders. This has interesting implications for the business, because both the sales leaders and sales representatives need to know that the other person experiences the exact same behaviour in a different way. It comes back to an idea of defining what the situation is and defining what the leadership role is. For example, perhaps the sales leader takes an account report and circulates it among the various teams internally who need the information for reporting to save the salesperson time, and that is perceived by the sales leader as an enabling behaviour. The sales representatives experience it as protecting their time. There is a difference in the way they each experience the exact same behaviour, depending on which end of the hierarchy they are. Clearly this would have implications for many areas such as coaching discussions and training, as the term 'enabling' could be used for sales leaders and protecting could be used for the salesperson.

The charts below (Figures 5-13 & 5-14) show the breakdown of the patterns of responses from the sales leaders and sales representatives regarding the championing behaviour. It is interesting to note that the themes of 'protecting and filtering' that were used for the analysis (which represent the term 'sales enabling' by the sales leaders), internal championing, and learning, were identified as subcategories within this leadership behaviour.

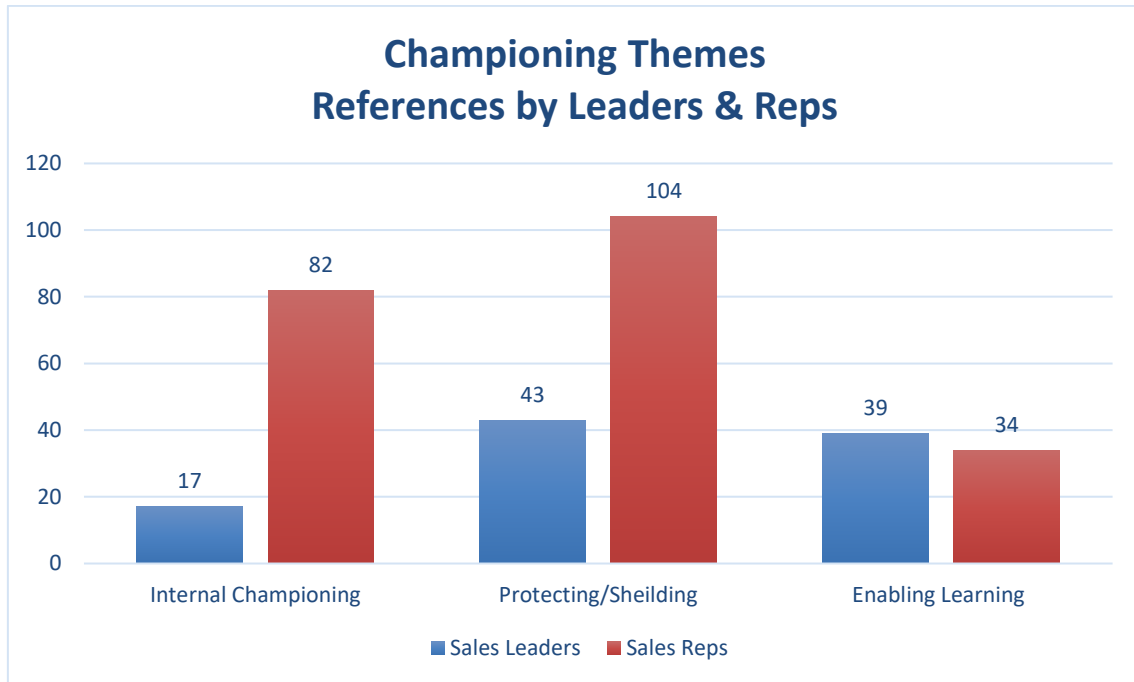


Figure 5-13 Championing themes references by sales leaders & sales representatives

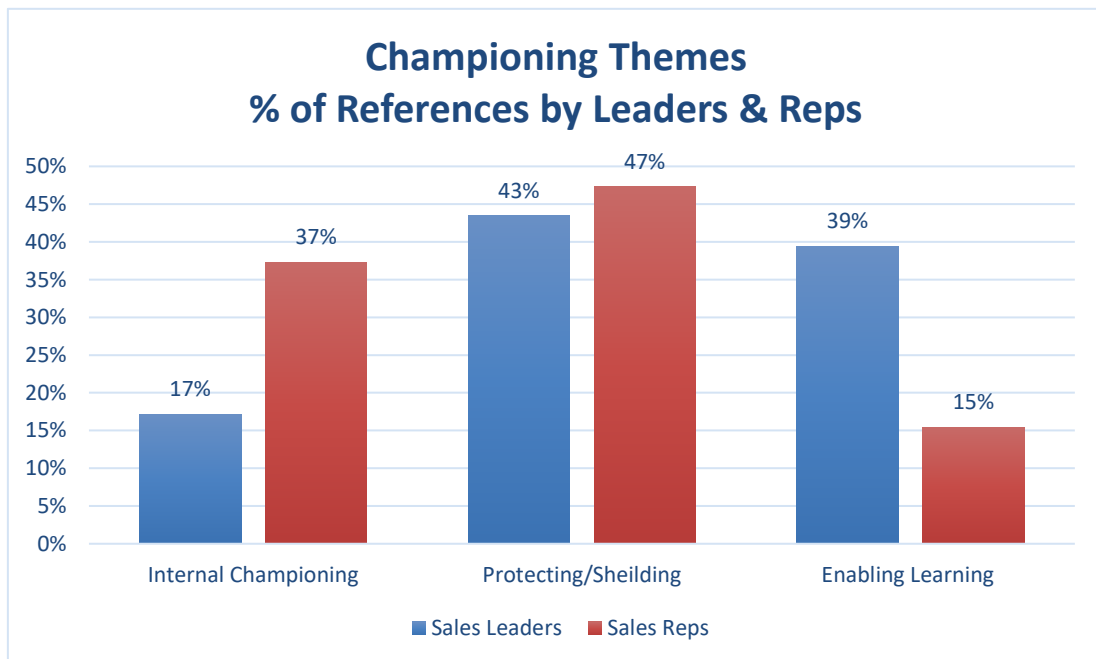


Figure 5-14 Championing themes percent of references by sales leaders and sales representatives

Both the sales leaders and sales representatives most frequently referred to the protecting/shielding aspect of this behaviour. The sales representatives spoke

more about the need for internal championing than the sales leader, and the sales leaders spoke more about enabling learning than the sales representatives.

5.3.4 Customer Engaging

The customer engaging behaviour is another leadership behaviour where differences between sales representatives and sales leaders were noted. This behaviour was discussed with greater frequency and emphasis from the sales representatives, compared to the sales leaders. In the semi-structured interviews, the sales representatives discussed at length that the sales leaders who were engaged with customers enabled salesperson performance. They discussed the difference between sales leaders who were “spreadsheet managers” vs sales leaders who engaged with customers, and made it clear that leaders who engaged with customers were perceived to enable salesperson performance.

Interestingly the sales representatives discussed the importance of implementation of this behaviour. They indicated that it was critical for the sales representatives to lead the customer engagement, and that the sales leaders were to act in a supporting manner. They suggested that sales leaders could support, by engaging with senior level representatives and coming to the customer’s sites to understand the situation and help fight the case for the customer internally based on this knowledge. The sales representatives were clear that sales leaders needed to engage in ways that were beneficial to the customer opportunity, and that they did not want the sales leaders to take over the selling process.

The charts (Figures 5-15 & 5-16) below show the breakdown of the patterns of responses from the sales leaders and sales representatives regarding the customer engaging behaviour. It is interesting to note that both the sales leaders and sales representatives spoke about the importance of effectively working with the sales team when engaging with customers, and about the concept of sales leaders building customer relationships. The sales leaders spoke also about customer centricity; however, this theme was not discussed by the sales representatives.

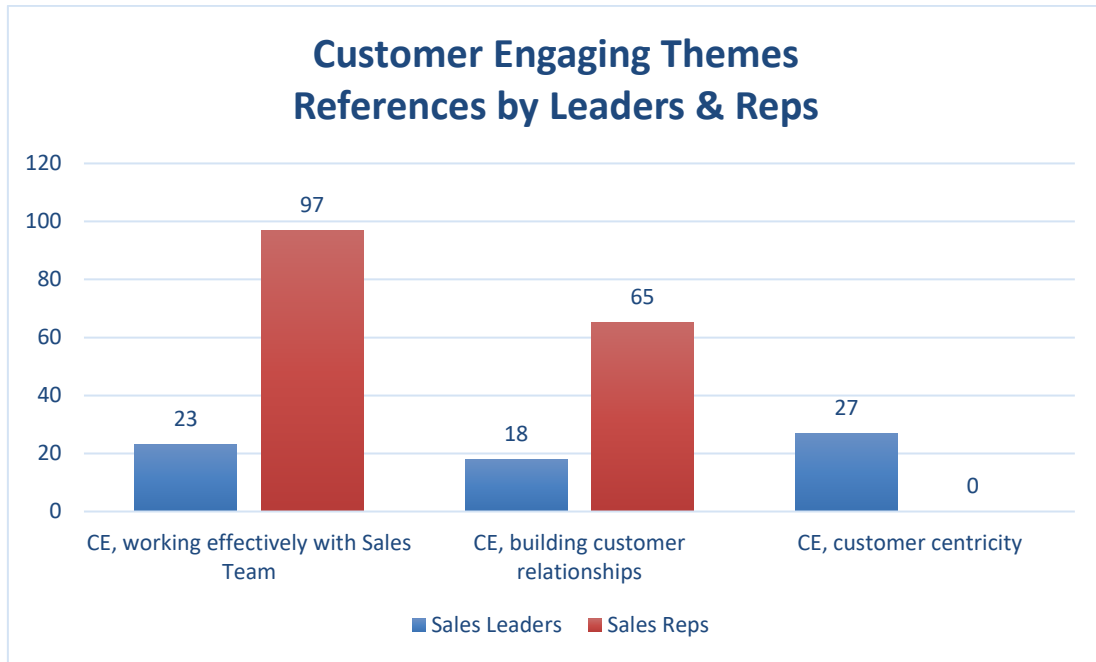


Figure 5-15 Customer engaging themes references by sales leaders & sales representatives

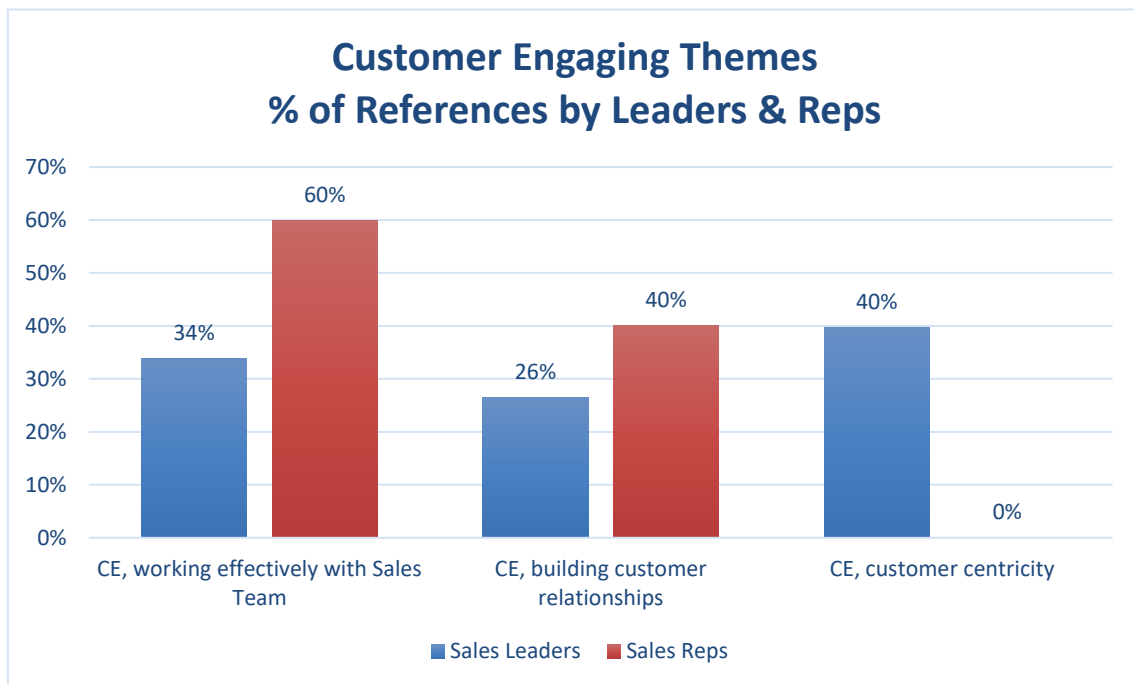


Figure 5-16 Customer engaging themes percent of references by sales leaders & sales representatives

Overall, it seems that the sales representatives had more voice regarding the customer engaging leadership behaviour than the sales leaders. The sales leaders were more balanced in their approach between the themes identified with this behaviour, whereas the sales representatives spoke more about the importance of the sales leader engaging with customers and working effectively with the sales team. They also emphasised that sales leaders should engage in building customer relationships, as well as the sales representatives.

5.3.5 Challenging and Candidate Recruiting

When reviewing the data, a difference of emphasis of the sales representatives and sales leaders became apparent with the leader behaviour called 'challenging'. Based on frequency of mention and emphasis, the sales representatives spoke more about the requirement for this behaviour than the leaders. As well, there was a clear difference in the 'candidate recruiting' behaviour, which was primarily identified by sales leaders and not sales representatives. This is not surprising based on the differing roles of each sales professional; however, it is a notable finding.

5.3.6 Potential mediators

Differences existed between sales leaders and sales representatives with emphasis on mediators. There were more references to the potential mediator of 'trust' by both the sales leaders and the sales representatives in the semi-structured interviews than the other potential mediators. When considering percent of total, it seems that the sales leaders spoke with greater frequency about both trust and confidence than the sales representatives. It is interesting that the sales representatives also spoke about optimism and resilience, while the sales leader did not mention these potential mediators.

The charts below (Figures 5-17 & 5-18) highlight these similarities and differences.

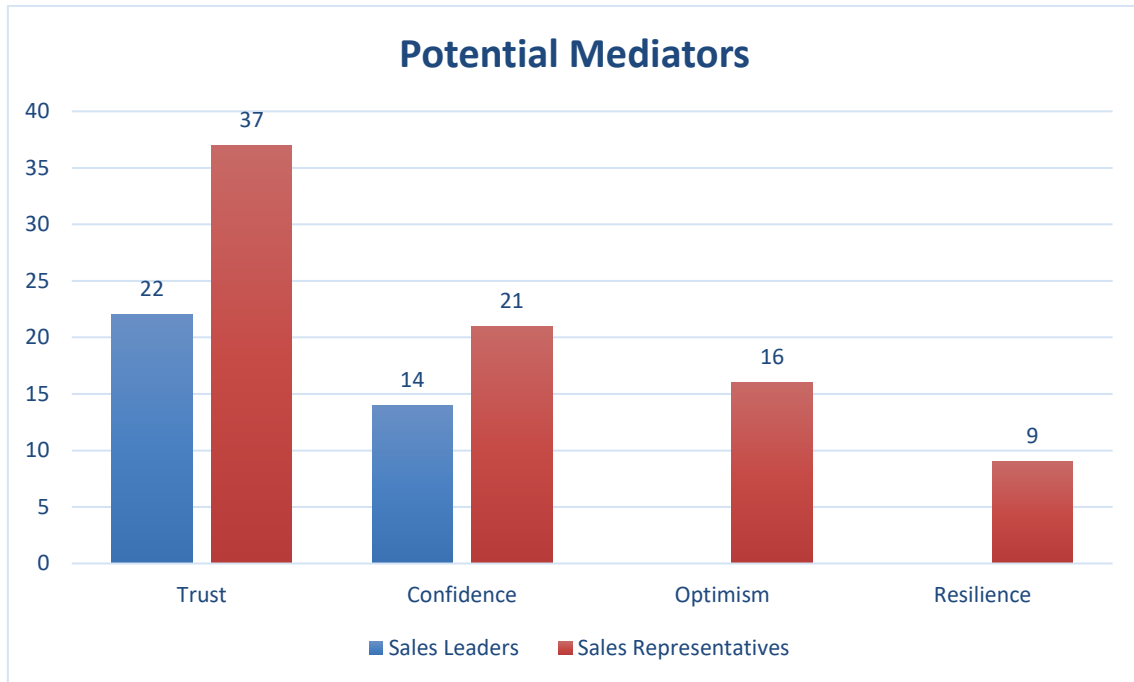


Figure 5-17 Potential mediators references by sales leaders & sales representatives

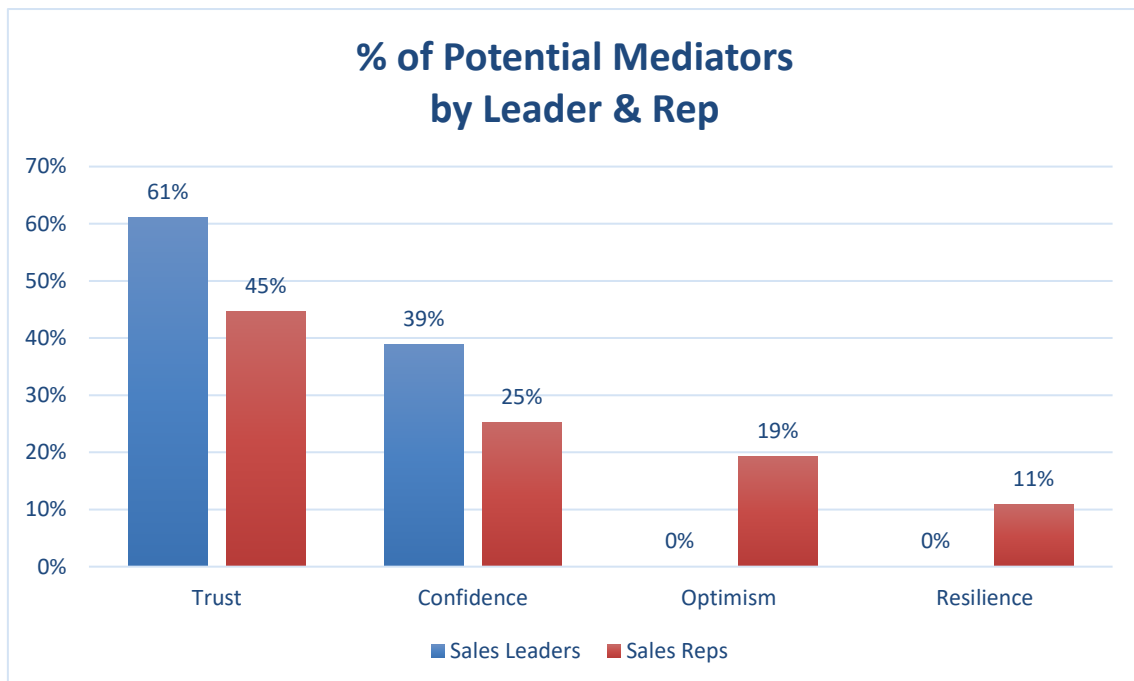


Figure 5-18 Percent of potential mediators references by sales leaders and sales representatives

5.4 Differences between high, average and low performing sales representatives

Key findings were identified when comparing the views of high, average and low performing sales representatives. There were two themes identified from the data (Table 5-2). Firstly, the high sales performers made more statements regarding leadership behaviours that enable salesperson performance than the average and low performers. Based on the data and semi-structured interviews, the high achievers appeared to be stronger at reflecting their experiences and they provided more references to leadership behaviours perceived to enhance salesperson performance. Second, the high achievers referred to 'coaching' almost twice as much as the average and low performers (see Figure 5-19 & 5-20). As such, high performing sales representatives seemed to be communicating more like sales leaders than average or low performing sales reps. All sales representatives seemed to refer to 'collaborating' and 'championing' with a similar pattern of response. One leadership behaviour the high performing sales representatives referred to more than the average, low performers and more than the sales leaders, is the 'customer engaging' leader behaviour (Table 5-2, Figure 5-19 & 5-20), suggesting a finding about the importance of this behaviour in generating enhanced salesperson performance.

Table 5-2 Comparison of pattern of responses between high, average and low performing sales representatives

Sales Rep Comparison based on Stack Rank	High Performing N=8	Ave Performing N=8	Low Performing N=8
Enabling Leader Behaviours			
Coaching	128	78	57
Collaborating	71	66	63
Championing	62	61	56
Customer Engagement	67	38	24
Challenging	17	24	22
Creating Vision	18	8	11
Inspiring	14	6	14
Rewarding	6	10	4
Candidate Recruiting	2	0	2
Potential Mediators			
Trust	18	7	11
Confidence	15	4	2
Optimism	13	3	0
Resilience	8	0	1

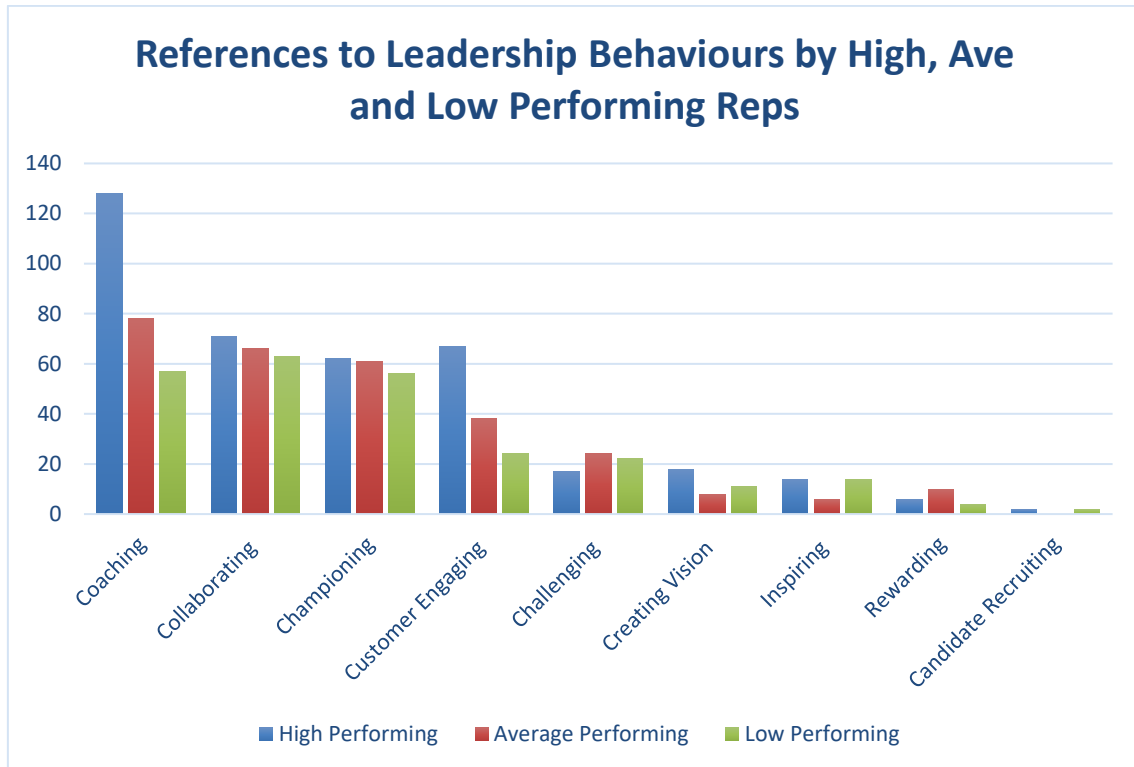


Figure 5-19 Comparison of high, average and low performing sales representatives references to leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance

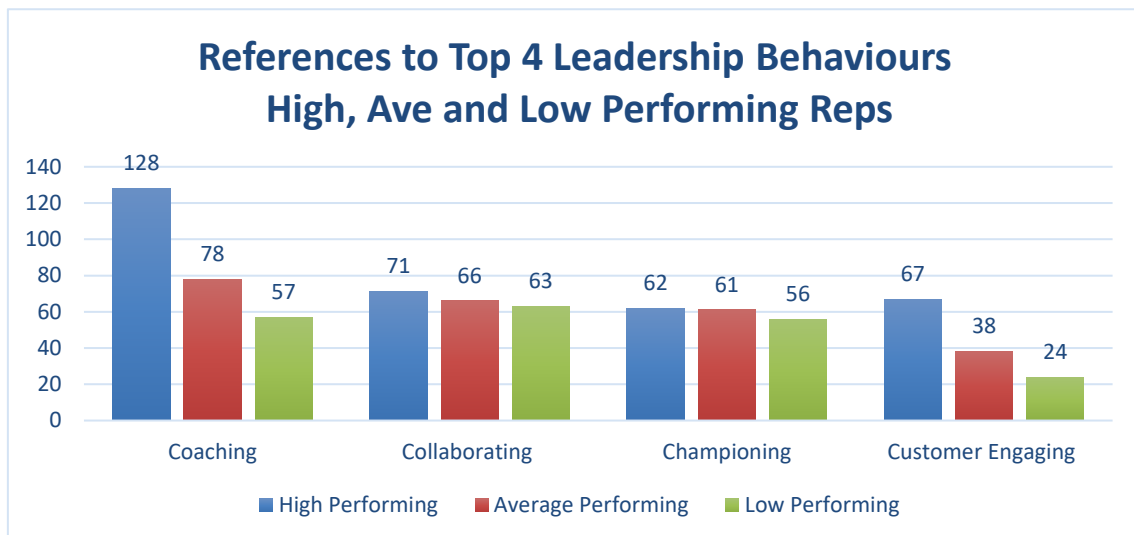


Figure 5-20 Comparison of the top 4 most referenced leadership behaviours by high, average and low performing sales representatives

This analysis also produced interesting findings regarding potential mediating links between sales leadership and sales performance when comparing the high,

average and low performing representatives. The top performing sales representatives spoke about how sales leaders can impact confidence, optimism and resilience, three elements of psychological capital discussed in Authentic Leadership (Northouse, 2010), and that in turn was suggested to enhance salesperson performance. The average and low performing sales representatives did not speak at length about these constructs; however, they focused primarily on trust. It is interesting that average performing representatives did not even mention the resilience construct, and only one low performing representative made mention of it. The high performing sales representatives discussed the importance of resilience in sales, especially when sales representatives must come back from losing a customer opportunity.

Table 5-2 presents this data and Figure 5-21 provides an illustration of the trends of response rate. There were 24 sales representatives in this analysis, split evenly into groups of 8, based on stack rank performance.

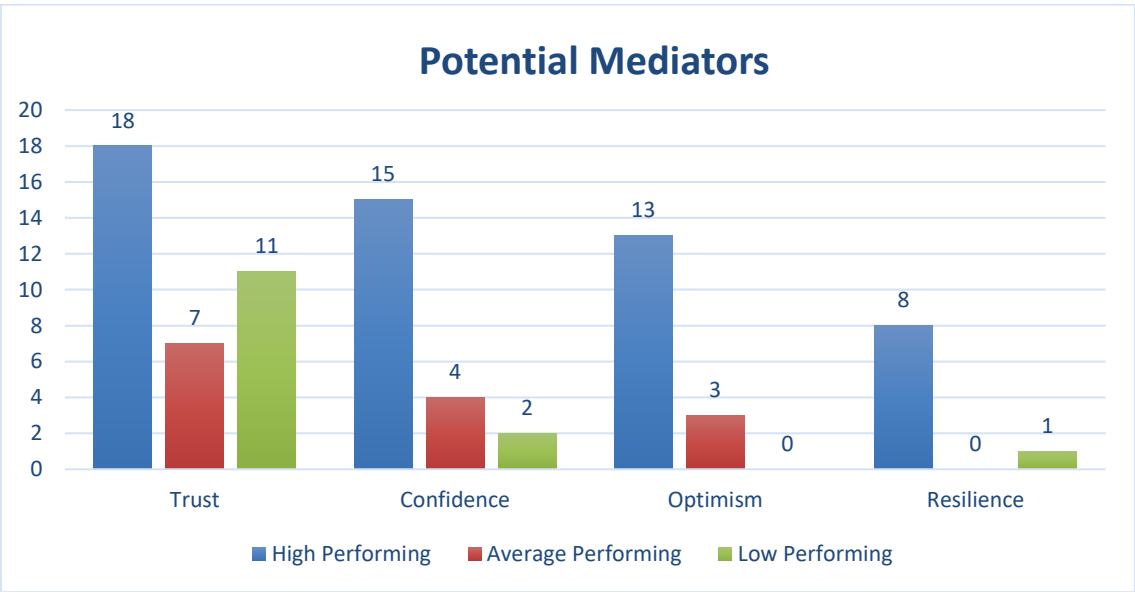


Figure 5-21 References to potential mediators by high, average, and low performing sales representatives

5.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter the combined findings from the main study and pilot study were presented, with an emphasis on comparing results on what leadership behaviours are perceived to enhance salesperson performance from different perspectives. Firstly, differences and similarities of sales leaders and sales representatives were analysed, leading to the presentation of findings regarding the perspectives of both the follower and the leader. Leaders talked more in general, particularly more about coaching, while reps talked more about collaborating, customer engaging and challenging. Potential mediators were also compared. Second, differences and similarities of high performing, average performing and low performing representatives were presented. In general, high performing representatives' responses were more like sales leaders' responses than the responses of average and low performing sales representatives. The high performing sales representatives referred more frequently to the coaching and customer engaging leadership behaviours than the average and low performing sales representatives. They also spoke more frequently about the potential mediators in general, especially confidence, optimism and resilience. The findings from this chapter will be considered in the upcoming discussion chapter in context with the existing literature.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the following claims to contribution made by this research will be discussed in the context of the academic literature presented in Chapter 2

1. The identification of a framework and categorisation of the sales leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance, providing confirmation that sales leaders adopt previously-identified leadership behaviours in the sales context (coaching, challenging/stimulating, creating vision, inspiring, and rewarding) and the identification of new leadership behaviours specific to the sales context (collaborating, customer engaging, championing, and candidate recruiting).
2. A closer examination of the particular forms the leadership behaviours take in sales leadership. This discussion will be focused on the most referenced leadership behaviours of coaching, collaborating, customer engaging, championing and challenging.
3. Indication of mediators (trust, confidence, optimism and resilience) between leadership behaviours and salesperson performance.
4. Development of our understanding of sales leadership from the perspectives of both the leader (sales leader) and the follower (sales representative), revealing both similarities and differences in their perceptions of leadership behaviours.
 - Sales leaders and sales representatives have agreement that coaching, collaborating, customer engaging and championing leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance.
 - Sales leaders spent more time talking about coaching, while sales representatives spent more time talking about collaborating, customer engaging and championing leadership behaviours.
5. Development of our understanding of sales leadership by comparing and contrasting the perspectives of high, average and low performing sales representatives.

- High performing sales representatives referred to coaching and customer engagement leadership behaviours more frequently than average and low performing sales representatives, indicating the importance of these two behaviours in enabling salesperson performance.
6. Investigation in the highly complex and relational, business to business global software industry context.
 7. Methodological contribution of the use of qualitative analysis in a field primarily dominated by quantitative analysis (91% quantitative literature in the field based on systematic literature review results).

This research has produced an understanding of what leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance, based on the perceptions of sales leaders and sales representatives. The findings suggest that sales leaders and sales representatives believe that leadership behaviours have an impact on performance. The research was conducted in a global enterprise software company operating in the complex business to business software sales environment, with sales people based in subsidiaries around the world. The focus on this research was on the experiences and perceptions of leadership behaviours of both the sales leader (leader) and the sales representatives (follower). As well, this research explored the experiences and perspectives of high, average and low performing sales representatives.

Section 6.1 has provided the introduction to the chapter and a summary of the claims to contribution to knowledge. In Section 6.2 the framework of leadership behaviours identified in the findings will be discussed in relation to existent literature. In Section 6.3 the particular form these leadership behaviours may take in sales will be discussed. In Section 6.4 the potential mediators identified in the research will be discussed. In Section 6.5 different perceptions of leadership behaviours identified by sales leaders and sales representatives will be discussed in relation to the literature. In Section 6.6 different perceptions of leadership behaviours by high, average and low performing representatives are considered. In Section 6.7 the new context of the research will be discussed. There will also be a discussion in Section 6.8 on the methodological contribution

of adding a qualitative analysis into the field. Section 6.9 will summarise the chapter.

6.2 The Identification of a Sales Leadership Behaviour Framework

This present research study has responded to a number of calls for additional research on leadership in the sales context, as current theory does not cover everything described in sales (Bass, 1997; Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012; Dubinsky et al., 1995; Evans et al., 2012; Ingram et al., 2005; Jaramillo et al., 2009; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). The present research provides a more textured detail of some of the behavioural categories within the broader domain of leadership. It found that specific transformational and transactional leadership behaviours previously identified in the literature were perceived to enable salesperson performance: coaching (individualised consideration), challenging (intellectual stimulation), creating a vision (idealised influence), inspiring (inspirational motivation), and rewarding (contingent reward) (Bass, 1985). These are broad-based leadership behaviours that sales leaders can adopt in some way into the sales context. New leadership behaviours appearing specific to the sales context also emerged from the data. Collaborating, championing, customer engaging, and candidate recruiting were identified by the respondents as leadership behaviours, which are perceived to enable salesperson performance. These are not identified as leadership behaviours in the traditional literature (e.g., Bass, 1985), but are presented here as sales leadership behaviours because aspects of these behaviours appear to be appropriate for the sales environment based on the data.

The major contribution of this research is the sales leadership behaviour framework itself. The framework summarises the coded data responses collected from sales professionals as they spoke about their perceptions and lived experiences of sales leadership. In the framework, the leadership behaviours identified by the respondents are coaching, collaborating, championing, customer engaging, challenging, creating vision, inspiring, rewarding and candidate recruiting. These impacts of sales leadership behaviours on salesperson

performance is potentially mediated by trust, confidence, optimism and resilience. Candidate recruiting acts differently to other forms of sales leadership behaviours on salesperson performance. While effective recruiting of excellent sales representative candidates was perceived as enabling salesperson performance, it is not a behaviour that acts on the current sales representatives and is therefore not mediated in the same way. The Sales Leadership Framework, which was introduced in Chapter 4 is presented below as Figure 6-1.

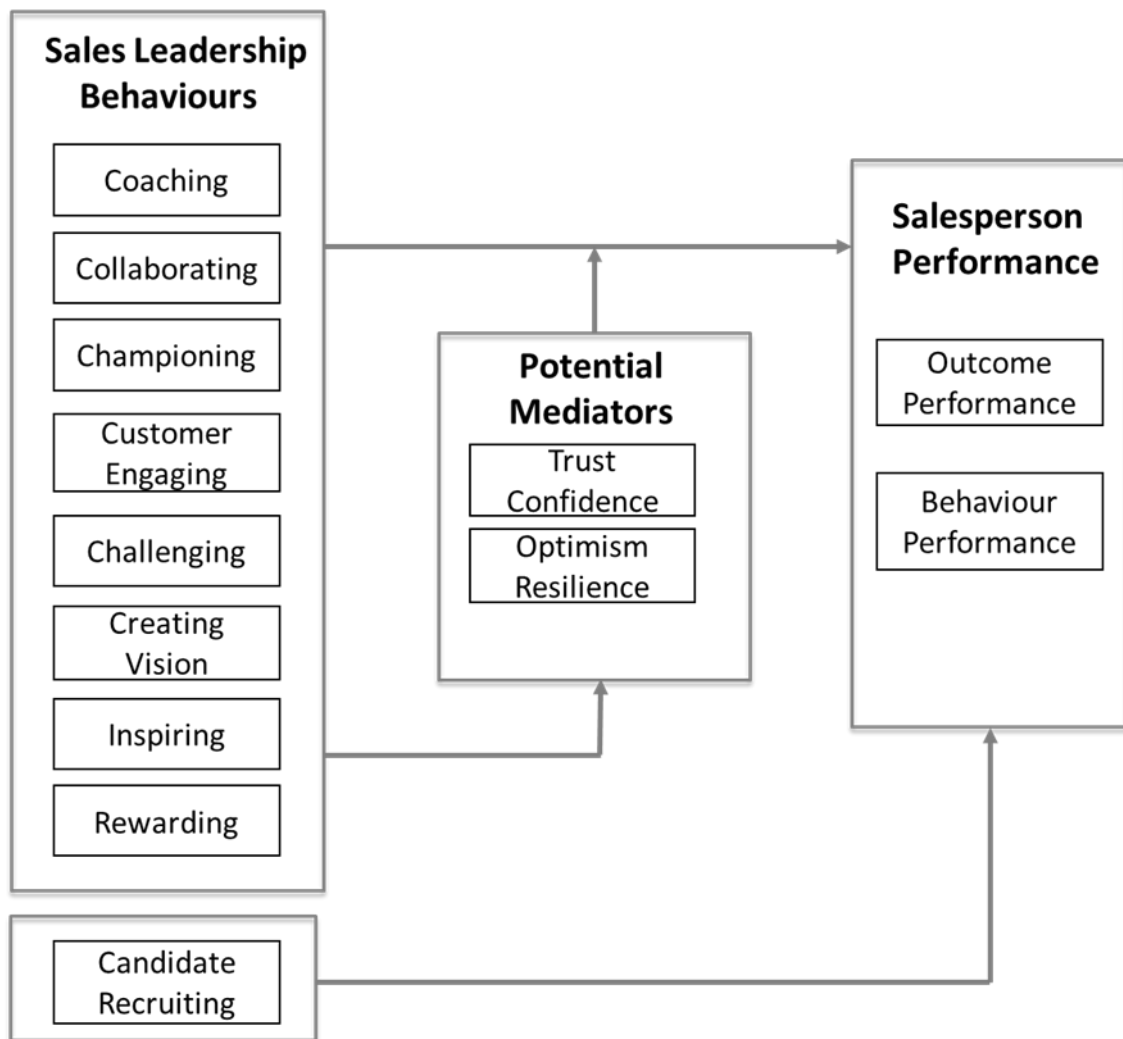


Figure 6-1 Framework of sales leadership behaviours

The Sales Leadership Framework and the Literature

Sales leaders can generate positive sales performance through the use of leadership behaviours (Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; Mackenzie et

al., 2001; Panagopoulos and Dimitrais, 2009; Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010); however, improving our understanding of which behaviours are best used in the sales context is critical, and the sales leadership framework attempts to help develop this understanding. This framework fits into the literature as an emergent framework of sales leadership behaviours that are perceived to enable salesperson performance in the complex business to business sales context.

Leadership is a widely-researched topic, with many reviews that summarise the key theories of leadership: transformational leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, contingency leadership and leader member exchange (e.g., Bryman et al., 2011; Day and Antonakis, 2012; Northouse, 2010). It has been identified that there is a need for greater exploration of leadership and performance in the sales context, an emerging field that is in its infancy (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2008). The framework from the present research contributes to this discourse by providing a new approach to sales leadership emerging from the perceptions of sales leaders and sales representatives.

The academic articles identified in the literature review that draw on leadership paradigms are primarily focused on the theories of transformational and transactional leadership (e.g., Arnold et al., 2009; Bass, 1997; Bettencourt, 2004; Chi et al., 2008, 2011; Dimaculangan and Aguilin, 2012; Dubinsky et al., 1995; Grant, 2012; Mackenzie et al., 2001; Panagopoulos and Dimitrais, 2009; Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010; Shannahan et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2012). The literature on transformational and transactional leadership behaviours will now be discussed in relation to the identified sales leadership framework of the present research.

Transformational Leadership

The identification of some transformational leadership behaviours in the model presented in the present research is interesting, as previous sales leadership research has found conflicting evidence about the effectiveness of transformational leadership behaviours on sales performance (Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). MacKenzie et al. (2001) found that transformational leader behaviours augment the impact of transactional

leadership. While they also found that the transformational leadership behaviour of idealised support (coaching) was positively related to in-role sales performance, the core transformational behaviours (e.g., visioning, inspiring) were not positively related to in-role sales performance. Further, these researchers found that the intellectual stimulation leadership behaviour was negatively related to in-role sales performance (MacKenzie et al., 2001). The present research both supports and challenges the MacKenzie et al. (2001) findings. It supports MacKenzie et al.'s (2001) findings that transformational leadership behaviours have a stronger direct and indirect relationship with sales performance than transactional leader behaviours based on the amount of references in the semi-structured interviews to these behaviours. The present research supports the MacKenize et al. (2001) finding that transformational leadership augments the impact of transactional leadership on salesperson performance, as some transactional behaviours were also discussed.

Also, the present findings support the evidence provided by MacKenzie et al. (2001) that individualised support (coaching) enables salesperson performance, as this was identified as the most referenced leadership behaviour perceived to enable salesperson performance. However, the present research challenges the findings that intellectual stimulation is not positively related to in-sales performance, as respondents in this study indicated that this leader behaviour (referred to as the challenging leadership behaviour in the framework) is perceived to enable salesperson performance. The finding of this present study suggests that challenging behaviour enhances salesperson performance supports Bass' work (1985, 1997). In addition, this research found that core transformational leadership (e.g., visioning, inspiring) behaviours were perceived to enable salesperson performance, and thus they are included in the model.

Transactional Leadership

Previous sales researchers have identified that transactional leadership behaviours, such as rewarding and correcting, may be preferable to transformational leadership behaviours in sales settings to enable sales performance (Dubinsky et al., 1995). Recently, due to changes in the sales

environment, it has been suggested that we “now operate in an environment where command and control may not always be the most effective choice” (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012, p. 9). The present study challenges some of the results of the Dubinsky et al. (1995) study that provides support for using transactional leadership behaviours, rather than transformational leadership behaviours to induce improved work outcomes in sales settings. This present research provides support for using some transformational leadership behaviours. It also identifies new sales leadership behaviours that can be used to enable salesperson performance. This present research also supports Dixon and Tanner, Jr.’s (2012)’s argument that transactional command and control leadership behaviours are not always the most effective choice in the current sales environment, as indicated by low frequency of references to the rewarding leadership behaviour, and by the behaviours presented in the proposed framework. Overall the results of this study challenges elements of past research (Dubinsky et al., 1995) and provides support to previous leadership research, which has found that transformational leader behaviours do influence followers to perform beyond expectations (Bass 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Howell and Avolio, 1993; MacKenzie et al. 2001). This research provides a new understanding of leadership behaviours that enable salesperson performance, confirming four transformational leadership behaviours, one transactional behaviour and introducing four new sales specific leadership behaviours.

Proposed New Sales Leadership Framework

Schwepker, Jr. and Good (2010) proposed that leadership behaviours need more inspection in the sales environment and called for research to identify a subset of leadership behaviours that are most effective in generating sales performance. Ingram et al. (2005) called for researchers to “precisely define the type of activities being studied” in sales leadership research (Ingram et al., 2005, p. 149). The sales framework presented in this research, responds to both calls to research and provides an overall view of leadership behaviours that enhance salesperson performance based on lived experience. This study defined leadership behaviours as the type of activity to investigate, and revealed which

behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance, forming the basis of a sales leadership framework.

The framework of sales leadership behaviour perceived to enable salesperson performance may be of value to both academics and business leaders. It may provide a better understanding of which sales leadership behaviours are associated with improved salesperson performance, and it may clarify existing questions asked by sales researchers. This present research suggests that sales leaders may make a positive impact on sales performance, using the leadership behaviours identified in the model and by moving away from the transactional behaviour focus, which often has been predominately used in the sales environment. By developing greater awareness and consciously applying specific leadership behaviours, this research indicates that sales leaders might create a situation which enables sales performance. This study contributes to the growing field of sales leadership research, which recognises that the sales environment is different to other areas of the business, and by connecting the domains of leadership and sales performance.

6.3 Most referenced leadership behaviours

There have been calls for a more in-depth understanding of the form of leadership behaviours in sales (Dubinsky et al., 1995, MacKenzie et al., 2001). There was a call for future research to consider how a sales manager might exhibit leadership behaviours in sales and “to examine more closely the particular form that these behaviours should take” in sales (MacKenzie et al., 2001, p. 128). In response, this research provides these types of insights in greater detail, and what has come out of this research is a more detailed understanding of the leadership behaviour constructs for sales.

The most referenced leadership behaviours of coaching, collaborating, championing, customer engaging, and challenging will be discussed in context with the literature.

6.3.1 Coaching

Previous research indicated that the coaching leadership behaviour is associated with performance beyond expectations (Bass, 1985; Corcoran et al., 1995; Northouse, 2010). The sales leadership literature on coaching has taken three directions. It has focused on the importance of the use of the coaching behaviour in conjunction with sales performance, providing ideas about the use of this behaviour, and it has highlighted the general absence of the use of this behaviour in the sales context. This research broadly supports those researchers advocating that coaching is an important leadership behaviour to use in conjunction with other leadership behaviours (Bass, 1985; Boehnke et al. 2003; Howell and Avolio, 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Other researchers, MacKenzie et al. (2001), found that individualised support (coaching) was positively related to in-role sales performance. They suggested that sales managers can improve their effectiveness by paying more attention to their transformational leadership behaviours, especially coaching. This present research provides additional confirmatory evidence of MacKenzie et al. (2001) results that coaching is perceived by sales people to be positively related to salesperson performance.

The perceived importance of coaching to enabling salesperson performance has been highlighted in the present research. This present research highlights the level of importance placed on coaching based on number of references to this behaviour and the emphasis of discussion. As well, it demonstrates that coaching was identified as the top leadership behaviour by both the sales leaders and sales representatives. Overall, the research shows an association between coaching and sales performance, providing further support to previous research by Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2008) that identified coaching skills to be one of the most important attributes for sales managers to use to increase sales performance.

This research also provides insights about the use of this behaviour in the sales context. Respondents identified the theme of individualised (personal) coaching as an important aspect for the use of this behaviour. This individualised coaching theme was the most referenced from both the sales leaders and sales representatives. The theme of coaching the sales process was also identified.

This theme was further broken down into the subthemes of strategic sales coaching and metrics driven coaching. By illustrating the differences in perceptions between sales leaders and sales representatives, the research helps show the form that this behaviour might take in sales. In doing so, this present research builds on research by Shannahan et al. (2013) who investigated coaching in the sales context and found that 'salesperson coachability' is an important predictor of sales performance.

Despite the perceived importance of this behaviour, respondents in this research suggested that coaching is not happening on a regular basis. This view was expressed by both sales leaders and sales representatives. It is not clear whether this is a result of short-term pressure to deliver quarterly results, or perhaps a culture in this sales context that does not openly support coaching outside the sales call and sales process. It may also have been indicative of a lack of role modelling and training, because some of the leaders indicated their own leaders did not provide coaching. This finding could be of great value to practitioners given that Corcoran et al. (1995) claimed that sales coaching may be one of the most significant opportunities to influence salesperson performance, which seems to remain valid in 2016.

Previous literature has provided various definitions of coaching. The coaching leadership behaviour is a component of the transformational leadership style called 'Individual Consideration' (Bass, 1985). Bass (1985) described the coaching leadership behaviour as one that helps individuals' recognise opportunities to improve their performance through "hands on" assistance. One definition of sales coaching from the literature is "a sequence of conversations and activities that provides ongoing feedback and encouragement to a salesperson or sales team member with the goal of improving that person's performance" (Corcoran et al., 1995, p. 118). Rich (1998) identified that giving feedback was a key construct of sales coaching. Ellinger et al. (2003) suggested coaching is defined as providing feedback, soliciting feedback and asking questions to encourage employees to think through issues themselves (Pousa and Mathieu, 2010).

In this research, the data identified that coaching descriptions matched many of the descriptions provided in the literature. Respondents discussed individualised coaching with a focus on personal development of the sales representative, which is supported by the literature (Bass, 1985). For example, Bass spoke about how “leaders should focus on individual followers need for achievement and growth by acting as a coach” (Bass and Riggio, 2010, p. 7). He suggested leaders provide learning opportunities and recognise and accept individual differences and listen effectively (Bass, 1985). This corresponds to feedback provided by the respondents in relation to the individual development coaching theme identified. The respondents suggested a sales leader should focus on personal coaching and career development. They suggested that the sales leader coach by asking questions, rather than coach by ‘telling what to do’. They suggested listening was a key skill, again supporting Bass (1985) individualised consideration behaviour definition. The respondents in this research suggested that leaders coach to give people options and help the sales representatives solve problems, supporting findings by Ellinger et al. (2003). The respondents did not suggest the sales leader solve the problem directly for the sales representatives. Respondents spoke about supportive coaching based on an understanding of the sales representative. An example quotation is provided from a high performing sales representation:

“you may have different drivers for each individual, and you may have different competencies within each individual. I find the best sales leaders are people who understand the individual and can turn on particular levers that play to that individual’s strength to allow them to be successful.” R26 SR HP

While the previous literature discussed and tested coaching and performance, using existing leadership models, it did not identify the specific form the behaviour should take in the sales context. Data from the semi-structured interviews in this research helped identify additional ideas about the form that this behaviour should take in sales. This present research has responded to the call to research from MacKenzie et al. (2001) to provide a detailed understanding of the form that

the coaching behaviour may take in sales. In examining the interview data, interesting ideas emerged about coaching the individual and coaching the sales process, such as the importance of development coaching, asking coaching questions and metrics driven coaching, which may improve our understanding about this behaviour in sales.

In this present research in the theme of coaching, the sales process respondents identified two elements, strategic sales coaching and metrics driven coaching. The importance of coaching strategic sales opportunities, sales processes, managing the loss and providing sales empathy, were identified as sub themes about this behaviour in sales. The present research supported a pattern found in past literature about the importance of coaching the sales call. Previous research found it to be important to coach the sales call, and suggested that it may be challenging to determine if somebody is making the right adaptations to specific sales behaviours (Evans et al., 2001). Previous research also demonstrated that going out on sales calls with sales representatives and coaching them will help generate improved performance, provided the feedback directly follows a selling behaviour (Rich, 1998). The evidence of this present study supports the past research that coaching the sales call is important; however, the present research built on this to expand on the importance of coaching the entire sales process, not just the sales call. As well, the importance of using coaching with metrics such as leading and lagging indicators was identified in the present research. This research provides a contribution, because while the practitioner literature makes references to strategic sales coaching and metrics driven (Jordan and Vazzana, 2012), relatively few academic articles have identified this form of the coaching behaviour in the literature.

The theme of coaching individual development was discussed at length in the semi-structured interviews. The present research supports findings by Good (1993) that when sales managers increased the time they spent coaching, they improved the long-term outcome of the salesperson. Consistent with Good (1993) and Rich (1998) sales professionals interviewed in the present research perceived that individual coaching sessions enable salesperson performance.

One of the sales leaders referred to these meetings as ‘mentoring sessions’, which focused on coaching the individual rather than simply coaching the sales process. Respondents discussed the importance of having a sales leader who coached by asking coaching questions, listening, and providing advice for development. These sessions were identified as having a positive impact on sales performance and personal development by both the sales leader and corresponding sales representatives.

The present study provides additional confirmatory evidence that sales coaching only happens if a clear priority is made consistently from the sales leader (Good, 1993), and that “coaching represents overt actions that require a specific and exact commitment to subordinates” (Good, 1993, p. 81). The respondents suggested that coaching worked best when individual coaching sessions were booked monthly. Based on feedback of the respondents and past research, it seems that booking monthly individual coaching sessions with consistency may enable salesperson performance.

As well, previous literature shows managers who have received formal training in coaching are more effective (Good, 1993; Graham et al., 1993), and respondents in this study also indicated the importance of training. In this present research, we learned it is necessary to make coaching a priority, to train the sales leaders on coaching, and to ensure coaching is occurring by higher level sales leaders as well as mid-level sales leaders. For example, one respondent pointed out the sales directors also need more coaching to improve performance. Coaching has been identified as an essential role that sales managers should employ to increase sales performance (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2002; 2008). The sales coach has been identified as playing a crucial role in mentoring salespeople to achieve desired performance levels (Mosca et al., 2010). Overall this present research indicates that the coaching leadership behaviour provides an interesting opportunity to further explore in relation to leadership and salesperson performance.

6.3.2 Collaborating

The importance of working collaboratively in sales and understanding leadership challenges associated with increasing collaboration, has been identified as a new direction for sales research (Ingram et al., 2005). A shift in language and metaphors used to describe sales has been occurring and it has been suggested that “salespeople must collaborate, not conquer” (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012, p. 12). The findings of this present research provide support to past research which suggests that collaboration is an area of importance in sales. In the semi-structured interviews of this present research the sales professionals’ spoke at great length about collaboration. They spoke about the need for sales leaders to encourage collaboration, facilitate collaboration and model collaboration. The sales people valued sales leaders who shared experiences and best sales practices. They highlighted exceptional sales leaders as those who promoted collaboration. This research provides additional confirmatory evidence of the importance of collaboration in sales and presents a new finding of a collaborative leadership behaviour which will be further discussed.

An area regarding collaboration that has been identified in the sales leadership literature as under researched is the marshalling of intra-organisational resources (Evans et al., 2012). The ability to manage internal resources has been identified in the literature as a key collaborative skill which is required to enable performance in sales (Evans et al., 2012). It has been found that successful salespeople manage internal resources to achieve better performance (Plouffe and Barclay, 2007). Respondents in this present research discussed how managing internal resources is important, and that sales leaders may be able to assist sales representatives in gaining access to internal resources. They suggested that sales leaders who can break down internal barriers will help enable improved performance. This supports findings in the literature, which have identified that salespeople who can manage internal resources, such as expediting a shipment and or managing an installation to gain customer’s confidence may achieve improved performance (Evans et al. 2012; Steward et al., 2010; Ustuner and Godes, 2006). Thus, it is suggested by this research that

sales leaders who use collaborative behaviours to help sales representatives manage internal resources will help enable salesperson performance.

Literature suggesting that salespeople and customers should collaborate on developing return on investments has been presented (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012). Understanding how resources are marshalled to propose effective solutions to customers has been proposed as a potential research question (Evans et al., 2012), and Bass (1997) found that collaboration with outsiders (e.g., business partners) is important to effective selling. Collaboration with customers is an important trend in the current sales environment. In the semi-structured interviews of this present research, sales representatives and sales leaders spoke about the importance of collaboration with customers to create solutions that meet the needs of the customer. As this skill is important to the sales representative to enable sales performance, it is important that the sales leader can model and use this behaviour to assist in the sales process. The results of this study are generally consistent with previous research about the need to collaborate with customers.

In the present research, respondents discussed the need for help from sales leaders on collaborative networking, both internally and externally. It was stated that this type of collaboration can foster teambuilding, help gain access to resources, and is perceived to enable salesperson performance. The findings from this study appear consistent with previous research (Cespedes et al., 1989; Evans et al., 2012; Ustunner and Godes, 2006). Evans et al. (2012) discussed factors which help create support networks, without incurring inefficiencies. Based on research by Ustunner and Godes (2006) and Cespedes et al. (1989), it was suggested that the facilitation of networks should occur in a way that “does not impose the traditional barriers often presented by functional silos” (Evans et al., 2012, p. 90). The literature suggests that management should help employees build networks that enable a degree of intimacy among work colleagues who have complementary skills (Ustunner and Godes, 2006). In the present research, it was highlighted that help by the sales leader to facilitate internal and external networking links, is perceived to enable salesperson

performance. Collaborative internal and external networking were described as key aspects of this behaviour that the sales leader can perform to assist the sales team by both sales representatives and sales leaders.

Previous research has shown that the sales environment is driven by collaboration (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012; Ingram et al., 2005). Collaboration was referenced to so frequently by both sales leaders and sales representatives that the emergence of a new leadership behaviour around collaboration is proposed in this research. An example of a quotation from a sales leader illustrates this behaviour;

“I like that they use me to get their collaboration with the team. They work together, find solutions together... They don’t need me every time, it’s just constant learning.” R17 SL

The data from this present research extends the literature that discusses the importance of collaboration (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012; Evans et al., 2012; Ingram et al., 2005) by identifying an actual collaborative leadership behaviour, which the sales professionals in this study perceive will enable salesperson performance. In summary, this research provides an interesting contribution to the leadership literature, potentially identifying a new sales leadership behaviour, and it supports existing research by providing additional confirmatory evidence of the importance of collaboration.

6.3.3 Championing

The presentation of the ‘championing’ leadership behaviour is a new finding. The ‘championing’ behaviour was identified as a protecting/shielding type of behaviour, in which the sales leader shields the salesperson from non-essential internal processes, to enable the salesperson to focus on the customer and achieve revenue targets. This was also referred to as an enabling behaviour, as leaders who use this behaviour intervene internally to champion the needs of their sales team and their customers. This championing behaviour does not seem to have been identified in the traditional sales leadership literature.

An article outside the sales leadership literature, based on the grounded theory methodology, identified the importance of “shielding” leadership processes in relation to cleaned up bureaucracies (John and Kriflik, 2006). The authors of this research suggested this idea of shielding provided a new direction for leadership research moving away from traditional leadership styles by placing emphasis on the importance of “shielding” leadership processes (John and Kriflik, 2006). John and Kriflik (2006) suggested that their view of leadership had some allegiance to the notions presented by the situational leadership model (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982) and path-goal theory (House and Mitchell, 1975) that leader behaviours are “perceived as motivation when they are aimed at removing impediments to goal achievement and providing guidance and support needed by subordinates” (Jones and Kriflik, 2006, p. 169). Removing obstacles to team performance has been identified as important in a leadership behaviour around team building (Boehnke et al., 2003), however the idea of championing by enabling, shielding, and removing obstacles to individual sales performance is a new finding.

It is interesting that this finding was identified using the qualitative method of research and by focusing on the subordinate expectations of leadership. This present study is one of a few studies in the sales leadership field which utilised the qualitative method of research, and focused on both the perspectives of the follower and the leader. Perhaps this method of study and the focus on the followers’ perspectives enabled the identification of this behaviour, as it enables the identification of a shielding leadership process by John and Kriflik (2006). This present study indicates that a championing leadership behaviour, which both shields and enables sales representatives, is an important leader behaviour to enable salesperson performance in large bureaucratic organisations, such as the one used in this research.

While the championing leadership behaviour has yet to be identified in the sales leadership literature, some support for the need of this type of behaviour has been presented (Evans et al., 2012). A higher need for accountability within the sales environment has been previously identified by researchers (Ingram et al., 2005). It has been recognised that due to daily interactions with customers and business

partners, salespeople have a strong opportunity to gain and share knowledge from the marketplace with their organisation (Bass, 1997). With the increase in complexity in the sales organisation (Ingram et al., 2002), it has been proposed that a way to deal with this complexity is to develop a “learning sales organisation” (Chonko et al., 2002). The knowledge that the sales force has of the marketplace is important to capture. For example, collecting ideas, such as customer concerns into a reporting system is helpful, as their successful resolution is useful to both the customer and salesperson. The challenge is that sharing this valuable information from customers into an organisation takes time away from sales representatives working with customers. As well, based on feedback from the respondents of the present study, the increased need for accountability in sales (Ingram et al., 2005) has also resulted in additional reporting, which can at times act as an impediment to salesperson performance. The present research suggests that sales leaders should champion and protect their sales representatives from too much of these types of reporting requirements, to enable the salesperson to focus on the client and to enable salesperson performance.

Respondents of the present research identified that micro management of knowledge can hinder the ability to focus on the customer and deliver sales results. Respondents suggested that increased micromanagement of knowledge is occurring within the IT Company. It is due to these types of extra administrative requirements that they are seeking a sales leader who champions their sales team, enabling them to focus on customers, and protecting them from internal micromanagement behaviours to enable salesperson performance. An example of this is shown in the following quotation:

“So that kind of noise, the administrative noise, that CRM noise, too many questions, too many brainstorming sessions, too much documentation around account planning, hinders sales performance ... we will be on four calls about the same flipping deal in a week. What’s going to change from hour one to hour two, from Monday morning to Tuesday afternoon?” R10 SL

“there are sales managers who just do a lot of reviews and we call them spread sheet managers... sometimes you can hear a sales guy saying in a week I have like three or four different people reviewing and that’s of no value” R 19 SL

The need for providing improved support to sales representatives and their customers has been discussed in the literature (Evans et al., 2012). Investigating how organisations can facilitate the provision of resources to sales representatives to help them serve customers better has been put forward to enhance sales performance (Evans et al., 2012). In addition, it was identified by Brashear et al. (1997) that more time spent focused on the client will lead to higher levels of performance. Thus, using the championing leadership behaviour with sales representatives will enable more client focus, which may also enable sales performance. In the present research, many respondents suggested this was the case.

It is possible that the need for the championing leadership behaviour emerged, due partly to these factors of increased accountability and reporting identified in the literature. Perhaps the perception of the importance of this championing has emerged, due to the accountability changes in the sales environment (Ingram et al., 2005), and possibly due to the bureaucratic nature of the business of study. It does appear that there is a link between time spent focused on customers and sales performance (Brasher et al., 1997). As the business requires additional accountability, it was indicated by respondents that sales leaders should consider identifying ways to champion and shield their representatives, to enable the customer focus they need to be successful. A sales leader who champions their sales representatives within the business and shields them from unproductive administrative tasks is perceived to enable customer focus and salesperson performance. This is presented as a new leadership behaviour in the sales context.

6.3.4 Customer Engaging

Previous literature has discussed the importance of customer-oriented behaviours in sales (Bettencourt et al., 2005; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997).

Other studies have discussed the importance of sales leaders being involved with customers (Deeter Schmelz et al., 2008). The requirement for this selling behaviour is supported by the literature. This present research suggests using the customer engaging behaviour as a leadership behaviour specific to the sales context.

In the present study, respondents often discussed the importance of sales leaders engaging with customers as key to enabling salesperson performance. The importance of sales leader customer centricity and engagement was discussed with emphasis. It was even suggested that sales leaders should engage with senior customer executives to help the sales team:

“We need our sales leadership, including myself to be out there going to meetings at CIOs and CEOs. Get out there, talk to board members of companies that we don’t do business or we do. Develop partner relationships” R10 SL

For this research, the customer engaging action has been described as a leadership behaviour, not a selling behaviour, although it may be a bit of both. The discussions were about how the sales leaders interact with both the customers and the sales representatives. The customer engagement with the sales representatives were about enabling team work, while allowing the sales representative to manage the customer. The respondents in the present study specified that a sales leader who can engage with customers at senior levels and then work with the sales representative in the appropriate manner will enable salesperson performance, and that is why it is referred to as a leadership behaviour, rather than a selling behaviour.

The implementation of this leadership behaviour may be challenging. It was described in the present research that while sales leaders should engage with customers, it is important that they demonstrate leadership and respect when working with the salesperson. In demonstrating leadership, the sales leader needs to understand their own role in the process, and not take over the client or customer meeting. Respondents of the present study suggested that they prefer it when sales leaders let the sales representatives manage the client relationship,

rather than having the sales leader take over the process. Sales representatives prefer to be the owner of the customer relationship and for the sales leader to be there in a specific role to support their team member. Interestingly, if we correlate these findings to the sales leadership literature (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2008) an idea emerges that while sales leaders can use this leadership behaviour to enable salesperson performance, it is important that the implementation is done correctly. Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2008) found that while sales managers believe their own selling skills are important attributes of an effective sales manager, the sales representatives in their study did not directly discuss selling skills as a key attribute of an effective sales manager. Based on Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2008) findings, sales representatives simply do not value a sales manager who does the selling. This past finding relates to a quotation from one sales leader in the present study who identified this concern:

“I think we (sales leaders) get in the way too much is the first thing. I think ...you think you are in danger of losing a deal, sometimes the temptation is you just step in because you are not going to have that deal lost... I think every time you do that, you betray trust and you dent the person’s confidence”. R11 SL

In addition, in the present study, one sales leader suggested a clear definition of roles of the sales leader and sales representative be established before entering into a customer meeting, and another leader suggested avoiding the “super Account Executive” syndrome, when the sales leader does the selling instead of the sales representative. It was also clear that the sales leader should be perceived as enhancing value to the sales representative and the customer, as some sales leaders were identified as not adding value. Therefore, as this behaviour is explored, it is important to consider it is about effective customer engagement leadership interactions, not just about selling per se.

6.3.5 Challenging

Previous researchers have discussed the importance of creativity in sales, due to the changing environment. “The process of securing and maintaining these client relationships, places additional pressure on salespeople to identify and

execute creative solutions; thus, salesperson creativity is a particularly relevant consideration” (Evans et al., 2012, p. 89). Respondents in the current research identified the need for sales leaders to provide a challenging leadership behaviour, which is like the intellectually stimulating leadership behaviour identified by Bass (1985). This relates to creativity, as it is a leader behaviour that sparks creativity, encourages rethinking of ideas, questions old ways of doing things, considers wild ideas, enabling sales representatives to think about old problems in new ways (Bass, 1985). In the present research, it was referred to as challenging, rather than intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1985) as that term fits with a sales training method the sales organisation uses called the ‘Challenger Sale’ (Dixon and Adamson, 2011), and thus the sales professionals used this terminology in the semi-structured interviews. In this ‘Challenger Sale’ methodology, salespeople are encouraged to act as challengers, developing a key understanding of their customers’ business, intellectually stimulating their customers to develop new ideas and adding value. Respondents, particularly the sales representatives, called out for the sales leaders to use a similar behaviour with them, to challenge them and help them think more creatively to meet customers’ needs. For example, one sales leader described how she engaged in challenging intellectually stimulating leadership behaviours to help her sales representatives with customer situations:

“we take that customer information and actually turn it into something that’s out of the box for the customer to think about ... it’s all about challenging the customer, and of course not in an inappropriate way but keeping the client thinking” R10 SL

This is interesting, as past researchers found that the challenging - intellectual stimulating leadership behaviour was negatively related to in role sales performance (MacKenzie et al., 2001) and a similar point is made by Dixon and Adamson (2011). Previous research has also found that the challenging-intellectual stimulation behaviour decreases citizenship behaviour (e.g., helping behaviour and sportsmanship) (Podsakoff et al., 1990), indicating that this behaviour does not consistently produce the desired result. MacKenzie et al.

(2001) suggested that the effects of this behaviour are more complex than originally proposed by Bass (1985) and stated “although intellectual stimulation may indeed produce the desirable effects expected by Bass in the long-run, it appears that in the short-run, leaders who continually urge or exhort followers to search for new and better methods of doing things create ambiguity, and thereby diminish in role performance” (MacKenzie et al., 2001, p. 131).

While the complexity of this leadership behaviour is evident, the results of this present research challenge the previous sales research finding that challenging (intellectually stimulating) decreases performance. The present research provides evidence that salespersons perceive that the challenging behaviour will enable salesperson performance, because new and better ways of doing things can enable the sales team to be more successful with customers. This study also suggests that the challenging behaviour is perceived as helpful in the complex sales environment, which has been identified as requiring creativity working when with customers (Evans et al., 2012).

6.4 Potential mediators of the link between sales leadership and sales performance

As data were uncovered, potential mediators that link sales leadership with sales performance emerged. An additional contribution of this research is the identification of the potential mediators of trust, confidence, optimism, and resilience between leadership behaviours and salesperson performance. Each of these mediators will be discussed in conjunction with the literature.

Previous research has described trust in a leader as a central element for transformational leadership theories (e.g., Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Kouzes and Posner, 1987; Yukl, 1989). Podsakoff et al. (1990) found that transformational leader behaviours influence organisational citizenship behaviours indirectly through effects on employees' trust. MacKenzie et al. (2001) identified that core transformational leadership behaviours and individualised support (coaching) and rewarding were positively related to trust (MacKenzie et al., 2001). The present research provides support for these previous findings, by suggesting that

trust was found to be a consequence of interactions between the sales leaders and the sales representatives. The sales professionals indicated that trust increased their sales performance, and they referred to trust frequently in the semi-structured interviews. This led to the emergence of trust as a possible mediating variable between the leadership behaviours and salesperson performance.

In addition to trust, the present study identified confidence as a potential mediator of leadership behaviour and salesperson performance. Previous research has found that a salesperson's level of confidence (self-efficacy) has a significant influence on sales representative's effort, and indirectly through expectancy (McMurrian et al., 2002). Spiro and Weitz (1990) found that a salesperson's confidence in their ability to use different selling approaches, and in their skill of altering the selling approach while working with customers, can influence the use of adaptive selling. In this present research, confidence was identified in the semi-structured interviews as a mediator that can be influenced by interactions between sales leaders and sales representatives. The respondents of this present research indicated that if the sales leader's behaviour is confidence-building, this may help enable salesperson performance. Thus, it seems confidence is a potential mediating variable between the leadership behaviours and salesperson performance.

Optimism and Resilience are additional mediators identified in the semi-structured interviews that could also be a result of the interactions between the sales leaders and sales representatives. Optimism was also identified by the respondents. If the sales representative's optimism is increased by the leader's behaviour and that leads to increased performance, then this would be a potential mediating variable. This provides support for results of a recent study by Rich (2015) suggesting that sales managers can enhance the salesperson optimism through coaching (individualised support); and that optimistic salespeople were more likely to be productive. Finally, resilience was identified as important to enabling salesperson performance. Sales representatives stated when sales leaders used specific leadership behaviours such as coaching, they were more

resilient. Resiliency is identified as being especially important when the sales team needed to bounce back from a lost customer opportunity. While resilience was not referred to as frequently as the other mediators, it was referred to primarily by high performing representatives with great emphasis, and thus represents another potential mediating variable.

The authentic leadership theory may provide a framework for understanding the respondent's comments regarding the importance of confidence, resilience and optimism. As confidence, optimism and resilience appear correlated in their effects, based on the data, the results provide support to elements of authentic leadership (Northouse, 2010).

“There are four key positive psychological attributes that have an impact on authentic leadership: confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience, which have been drawn from the fields of positive psychology and positive organizational behaviour. Positive attributes predispose or enhance a leadership capacity to develop the comments of authentic leadership discussed. Each of these attributes has a trait-like and a state-like quality. They are trait-like because they may characterize a relatively fixed aspect of someone's personality that has been evident through their life (e.g., Extraversion), and they are state-like because with training or coaching individuals are capable of developing or changing their characteristics” (Northouse, 2010, p. 221).

If the state-like quality of the three mediators identified of confidence, resilience and optimism is considered for this research, then the sales leader may impact these elements of the sales representatives based on their interactions and use of leadership behaviours. The results provide support to the notions of authentic leadership and psychological capital (Northouse, 2010) and extends this to suggest that this influence may impact sales results. This research provides data which suggests that it is perceived that sales leaders can use leadership behaviours to help increase salesperson confidence, encourage resilience, and optimism which in turn is perceived to enhance sales performance.

6.5 Examination of leadership behaviours from two perspectives: the leader and the follower

By comparing and contrasting perceptions of sales leaders and sales representatives' further contributions have emerged. As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature has suggested that sales leaders and sales representatives do not always view their environment in the same manner (DeCarlo et al., 1999; Evans et al., 2012).

In the sales literature and in the leadership literature there have been calls for the examination of leadership from the perspectives of the sales leaders and sales representatives. In the sales literature, it has been suggested that research should occur regarding sales management and salesperson interactions (Schwepker, Jr. and Good, 2010). In the leadership field, it has been proposed that researchers should consider the relationship of the leaders and followers rather than focusing on the separate identities of the individuals in the relationship (Ladkin, 2010).

Examining both the sales leaders and sales representatives' perspectives is important because other research has shown congruence between perceptions of leadership behaviours, and salesperson's desires for leadership behaviours has an impact on job satisfaction and effort (DeCarlo et al., 1999).

The exploration of additional research of the sales management phenomenon from the perspective of both the sales manager and the salesperson was called out as a critical requirement for the field (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2008). The present study further extends the study of Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2008) which focused on investigating leadership characteristics of sales managers from the perspective of salespeople and sales managers, extending it by the consideration of leadership behaviours versus characteristic in a world that looks very different in 2016. Furthermore, as a result of the dual nature of the research, taking both the perspective of the sales leader and the sales representative allowed for the exploration of sales management/salesperson interactions responding to Schwepker, Jr. and Good (2010) call to research. In addition, since sales representatives often act as leaders and followers in their boundary role between

customers and the organisation, capturing both perceptions has led to new insights and contributions to the literature.

6.6 Examination of leadership behaviours from three perspectives: the high performing, average performing and low performing sales representative

Previous researchers of sales performance compared the activities of high sales performers and low sales performers to better understand salesperson's behaviours and links to performance (Brashear et al., 1997). This approach of study was described as "not unique but not widespread" (Brashear et al., 1997, p. 177). This present study has compared perceptions of leadership behaviours of high, medium and low sales performers to better understand leadership behaviours and links to performance, bringing this approach to research which still not widespread.

Connections can be made with the present study to previous findings regarding high sales performers and time spent on sales activities and with customers. Brashear et al. (1997) found that high sales performers reported higher mean levels of the sales activities of selling and servicing customers. These researchers identified that more mean hours spent on performing sales activities, and more time invested in direct selling activity produced improved sales results (Brashear et al., 1997). This is relevant because the present study found that high performers discussed the importance of sales leaders using behaviours to help them spend more time with selling and servicing customers. The high performers in this present study referred to the need for a customer engaging leadership behaviour more frequently than low or average performing representatives. They also referred more frequently (although at a lesser extent) to the championing behaviour than the average and low performing sales representatives. The high performers suggested that these specific sales leadership behaviours (customer engaging and championing), which enable the sales representatives to spend more hours selling and servicing customers will lead to enhanced sales performance which provides support to the findings by Brashear et al. (1997). A

contribution of this present research is to take a step back and define these two specific sales leader behaviours for sales leaders to use with their sales team.

This present study also connects with the previous research with respect to the coaching leadership behaviour identified. The Brashear et al. (1997) study found that efforts directed towards selling and servicing clients delivers the payoff, not prospecting, planning or closing activities. The high performing sales representatives in the present study referenced coaching as a key leadership behaviour to enable salesperson performance. Sales leaders who use coaching to help their sales representatives focus on the activities that drive results, for example selling and servicing clients, will help enable salesperson performance based on this data and the results of the Brashear et al. (1997) research.

Interestingly, the Brashear et al. (1997) article found that low performers spent more time prospecting, planning and closing than high performers. They suggested that by doing these activities, the low performers may also engage in avoidance behaviours because of fear of failure, also referred to as sales call reluctance by Dudley and Goodson (1986). A form of sales call reluctance when sales professionals over-analyse and do not act was described as desurgency (Brashear et al., 1997). Desurgency can detract from the ability of the sales team to focus on selling and servicing clients. This present research connects to this claim by identifying confidence and resilience as key mediators to sales leadership behaviours and salesperson performance. The high performers in this present research referred more frequently to these mediators than the low and average performers. If leadership behaviours build confidence and resilience, then this will enable salesperson performance, and it may follow that the sales professionals will be more confident in spending more time selling and servicing clients, and coming back from lost sales deals, rather than engaging in call reluctance. Other than the Brashear et al. (1997) research, there appears to be very little research in this area. This may be interesting area for future study.

6.7 The Importance of industry context

The literature discusses the importance of researching sales leadership in the context of the changing sales environment (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012; Evans

et al., 2012; Ingram et al., 2005). It has been suggested that selling is now driven by the customer's value creation process, and the context of where the game of sales is played and the industry setting is important for future research (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012). In 2016 there was a call to research sales leadership in uncertain market conditions by the Global Sales Science Institute. There have also been previous researcher calls to examine leadership and sales performance in a business-to-business sales context, versus retail and consumer sales environments (Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001).

The context of the present research meets these criteria. The IT Company operates in uncertain market conditions, driven by rapid change in terms of development of new technologies and applications around enterprise infrastructure, networks, mobile applications, and cloud computing. The organisation is a market leader operating in over 150 countries, with almost 100,000 employees. The sales organisation of the IT Company works closely with customers throughout the world, using a value creation process to develop software solutions.

Significant changes are occurring in the context of the sales environment (Dixon and Tanner, Jr., 2012; Ingram et al., 2005). The changes occurring in the sales context can be connected to the changes in the leadership behaviours required, helping to explain why there is a need for different leadership behaviours. This research around the use of leadership behaviours in the complex, highly relational, business to business global software sales environment will add to the field, simply by investigating in this context. This present research suggests that the modern global sales environment requires different leadership approaches, such as a focus on coaching and collaboration, possibly because of the complexity of this environment.

6.8 Application of qualitative research methodology

The review of the literature has demonstrated there has been limited empirical research to date, using the qualitative research methodology in sales leadership, and thus this research presents new empirical qualitative data. This research is only the third publication to use a qualitative analysis approach based on the

systematic literature search of this thesis (see figure 2-3). This study represents the first empirical examination using qualitative research methods to examine the link between sales leadership behaviours and sales performance. There is evidence that the main behavioural leadership theory - transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) - produces results beyond expectation (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Boehnke et al., 2003; Howell and Avolio, 1993), yet this was not conclusively supported in the sales environment (Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001). Since creating results beyond expectations is the driving force of the sales organisation it was expected that a behavioural based model could be relevant for this context. The results of this study confirm that leadership behaviours are perceived to enhance salesperson performance. By using an exploratory approach, this research was able to provide inductive findings and a richer data set to enhance understanding of the relationships between sales leadership behaviours and salesperson performance. Feedback from the respondents provided concrete examples of behaviours and actions sales leaders can take to enable sales performance. The research data regarding sales leaders and sales representative's perceptions of leadership behaviours, which enable sales performance in the context of complex highly relational business to business software industry, may help to fill some gaps in our understanding of the relationship between sales leadership and sales performance. The general pattern of the results support the goals of this research and illustrates how new insights can be derived using qualitative data and lived experiences.

In the leadership studies' literature, there is an ongoing debate between reductionist accounts with a positivistic approach focused on the actions of a leader, and the social constructionist approach, which suggests leadership is about social processes (Ladkin, 2010). Focusing on leadership behaviours using the qualitative approach has provided rich data that provide some insights to help add to this discourse and debate through the collection of stories that include leadership moments.

6.9 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has set out a number of claims to contribution, including the identification of a framework of frequently mentioned sales leadership behaviours, perceived to enable salesperson performance. Providing confirmation that sales leaders adopt previously-identified leadership behaviours in the sales context (coaching, challenging/stimulating, creating vision, inspiring, and rewarding), and the identification of new leadership behaviours which appear appropriate to the sales context (collaborating, customer engaging, championing, and candidate recruiting). As well, this research identified potential mediators between leadership and salesperson performance, and developed our understanding of sales leadership by comparing and contrasting perspectives of sales leaders and sales representatives, as well as perspectives of high, average, and low performing sales representatives. In addition, contributions are provided by the investigation in the highly complex and relational business to business global software industry context, using a qualitative approach, and in doing so, addressing several gaps in the literature.

7 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In Section 6 the discussion and contributions of this thesis were presented. In Chapter 7 the conclusions and implications of this study will be presented. In Section 7.2 the major contribution of this research, the sales leadership behaviour framework itself, which has been presented in Chapter 4, will be reproduced for ease of reference. The summary of contributions to theory and method is presented in Section 7.3, and Section 7.4 will provide the contributions to practice. Section 7.5 will discuss limitations and Section 7.6 will provide directions for future research. Finally, Section 7.7 will present the conclusion.

7.2 Framework of Sales Leadership Behaviours

For ease of reference, the sales leadership behaviour framework is reproduced here.

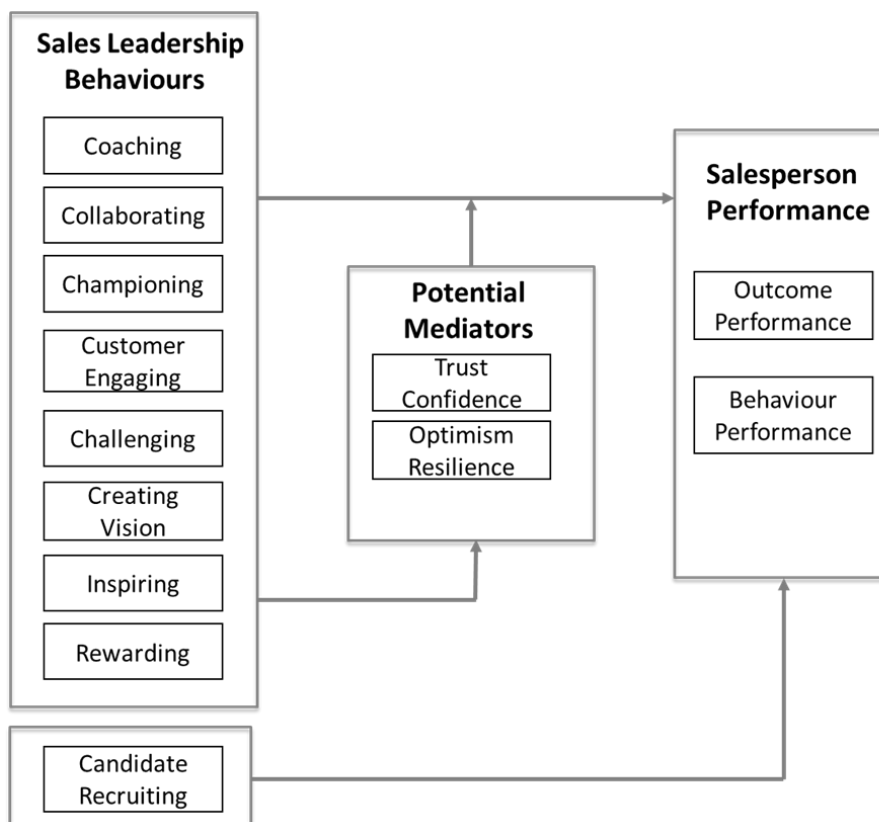


Figure 7-1 Framework of sales leadership behaviours

As discussed previously, the major contribution of this research is the sales leadership behaviour framework itself. The framework summarises the coded data responses collected from sales professionals as they spoke about their perceptions and lived experiences of sales leadership. In the framework, the leadership behaviours identified by the respondents are coaching, collaborating, championing, customer engaging, challenging, creating vision, inspiring, rewarding and candidate recruiting. The impact of these sales leadership behaviours on salesperson performance is potentially mediated by trust, confidence, optimism and resilience. Candidate recruiting acts differently to other forms of sales leadership behaviours on salesperson performance. While effective recruiting of excellent sales representative candidates was perceived as enabling salesperson performance, it is not a behaviour that acts on the current sales representatives and is therefore not mediated in the same way.

7.3 Summary of contributions to theory and method

Contributions can be provided into the three main forms of “new knowledge about the world of management (substantive contribution), new theories and ideas (theoretical contribution), or as new methods of investigation (methodological contribution)” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). A summary of the contributions to knowledge has been presented in this chapter and will be outlined to enhance clarity in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1 Summary of contributions to theory and method

Area of Contribution	Contributions	Type of Contribution
Contributions to Theory	The identification of a framework and categorisation of the sales leadership behaviours perceived to enable salesperson performance	Discovering
	Providing confirmation of leadership behaviours identified in the literature (coaching, challenging, creating vision, inspiring, and rewarding)	Confirmatory
	The identification of new leadership behaviours specific to the sales context (collaborating, customer engaging, championing and candidate recruiting).	Discovering
	A closer examination of the particular forms the leadership behaviours take in sales leadership.	Extending
	Indication of mediators (trust, confidence, resilience and optimism) between the sales leadership behaviours and salesperson performance	Extending
	Development of our understanding of leadership behaviours from the perspectives of both the leader (sales leader) and the follower (sales representative)	Discovering
	Development of our understanding of leadership behaviours from the perspectives of high, average and low performing sales representatives	Extending
	Investigation in the context of the global enterprise software industry	Extending
Contributions to Method	Methodological contribution of the use of qualitative analysis in a field primarily dominated by quantitative analysis (91% quantitative literature in the field)	Extending

In summary, the research provides contributions to both theory and method. In the table above the research objectives are described and the types of contributions are summarised. The next section, 7.4 will discuss contributions for practice and implications.

7.4 Contribution and implications for practice

Implications and contributions for practice are interesting and relevant. This study has produced evidence that specific sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance.

These findings are significant for industry. The high demands on sales leaders to perform and meet quarterly targets makes it difficult to use longer-term sales leadership behaviours such as coaching, which do not create immediate results. This research is powerful because it demonstrates that high sales results are perceived to be a direct result of this type of work. The research indicates that micromanaging, and using only short-term leadership behaviours will not enable salesperson performance and that sales professionals should consider new approaches. This research provides a framework of new leadership behaviours for practitioners, which may be utilised to enhance salesperson performance.

The data presented of perceptions of what leadership behaviours enable salesperson performance, may encourage sales professionals to consider utilising the new sales leadership behaviours outlined to enhance performance. They may in turn develop an awareness of how transactional leadership behaviours are often used in the industry, and that some of these behaviours, correcting and micromanaging, are perceived to hinder salesperson performance, rather than enable. The ideas may stimulate reflection about leadership practices in an industry driven by short-term pressures, and high requirements for performance at both the sales leadership level and the sales representative level.

As these findings outline what appears to be important behaviours in the current sales domain an organisation might want to train these ideas into sales leaders. Sales professionals could be taught to use these behaviours in the sales context to generate higher salesperson performance. The behaviours may be presented and discussed amongst the leadership team. Sales leaders can learn about the behaviours and then, through personal introspection, sales representative feedback, and through training techniques, these behaviours can be used to generate performance. Leadership training programmes can be developed,

based on the research to help support the development of these new skills. The evidence provided by this study may provide an impetus for change to enhance sales performance.

7.5 Limitations

This research is the first empirical study using qualitative research to examine what leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance and offers interesting ideas for salesforce research. It is exploratory, and the findings are subject to several limitations.

Firstly, interview methodology is limited by inherent issues with reliability and validity (Partington, 2002) due to reliance on the memory of the respondent. By using a social constructionist approach to collect qualitative data and learn about lived experiences of sales professionals, this produced data based on transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews. The researcher was not present to observe and/or participate in the experiences of the sales leaders actually interacting with the sales representatives, so is unable to confirm the perceptions and experiences. To mitigate that risk, this research worked with ideas from Miles and Huberman (1994) to address issues of reliability and validity using qualitative research. There was a clear focus on the transcripts and an iterative process of analysis was strictly followed. In addition, the researcher increased the number of respondents in the study from original plan of 20 to 36 respondents, to enable a robust sample to better understand the respondents lived experiences.

Second, the researcher's own experience in sales leadership in the technology industry may have resulted in researcher bias. To mitigate this risk, the researcher remained aware of this possibility and specifically targeted this potential limitation during the coding of the data. A process of an interrater reliability check did occur. This interrater reliability check resulted in a strong coder agreement (75%) which helped check that research bias did not come into play in the coding process. The framework development and writing of the thesis was data led. Data quality checks were made, and peer and colleague reviews occurred.

Third, the majority of the studies conducted in the sales leadership field use surveys, and it may be perceived that using qualitative research methods does not fit the positivist mind-set of the research community. However, Deeter Schmelz et al. (2008) made a positive impact with qualitative research, and this present research will build on this work. Adding qualitative research to the findings in the sales leadership literature from quantitative research, has the potential to make strong contributions to the field.

Fourth, this study was conducted in a very specific context of the complex, highly relational software sales business. Although the sample comprised of sales professionals from a variety of subsidiaries of the IT Company around the world, the salespeople were all from one company and one industry. While this approach was responding to calls to research and investigate in a more complex business to business sales environment (Arnold et al., 2009; Bass, 1997; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al., 2001), this could also be considered a limitation, as this context may not be representative of other sales environments. For example, the international scale might suggest that the sales professionals may have cultural differences, and perhaps the global reach of the IT Company may be managed in a way that is different to smaller companies. This is important to note, as previous research has found that “results can vary across sales settings (Churchill et al., 1985; Comer and Dubinsky, 1985)” (Dubinsky et al., 1995, p. 27).

The sample of this study is international, with respondents from 12 countries representing 4 major regions of the world (Europe, The Commonwealth, Asia Pacific, and the Middle East). Thus, the sample is representative of a typical global salesforce in a complex business to business sales environment in professional services, such as information technology (IT), management consultancy, financial services etc. where the sector sustains a number of very large international or global firms. The sample of sales professionals were all university graduates with significant work experience (please see demographic charts), which is representative of the kind of highly qualified, highly experienced people who are found in large business to business global sales environments.

This sample would not be representative of a sales environment, such as business to consumer, or retail sales environments, so the results of this study may not be generalisable to such contexts.

Finally, in this study, high performing, average performing and low performing sales representatives were compared. It was specifically requested, through email and direct communication that sales leaders categorise low, medium, and high performers, based on sales quota attainment performance (stack rank). However, there may have been an element of subjectivity in the categorisation of the sales representatives, as the sales performance data were strictly confidential and not available to the researcher. Using sales leader reporting methods was helpful, as it was easy to collect, and this approach did not require the leaders to reveal confidential sales figures from the IT Company. As well, this method could also be used in multiple selling situations across the subsidiaries. The main concern is that supervisory bias errors may have occurred. In addition, while the sampling method produced strong results, a drawback of this approach was that the sales leaders who volunteered to participate in the study were interested in leadership, and may have studied some course modules on leadership in their Masters programme. This may have created bias in their responses.

7.6 Directions for future research

Several future research directions emerged from the results of this study. Given the findings regarding leadership behaviours and salesperson performance, future research could examine perceptions of the sales leadership framework identified from a wider range of sales leaders and sales representatives. The research should be extended to include other selling organisations to consider the generalisability of the findings. As well, the researcher could observe and/or participate in the experience of sales leaders interacting with sales representatives to confirm the perceptions.

This research represents the first attempt to use qualitative research to explore sales leadership behaviours, to assess existing leadership behaviour models (e.g., Bass, 1985) and to identify new sales leadership behaviours specific to the environment. The framework that has emerged from the data will provide an

interesting model to test quantitatively in the future. Further research that focuses on blending the qualitative and quantitative approaches may be helpful to better understand leadership behaviours in the sales context.

Another area of future research may centre around studies on the specific leadership behaviours identified. There is a view identified by the respondents that too much of specific leader behaviours, such as coaching or the protective behaviour, could potentially hinder sales performance, and that is something to explore. For example, too much coaching on leading or lagging indicators, can be perceived as micro management, or too much protecting may not be helpful. There may be an optimal place in the middle, where a modest amount of these behaviours is conducive to good performance. This could well be an area for future research direction. It would also be interesting to better understand how the pressure driven modern sales environment may influence the sales teams' ability to reflect, their moral judgement, ethical behaviours, and ultimately sales results.

Exploration of the links to performance with respect to the leadership framework is required. In addition, exploration of how mediators influence sales performance may provide new insights.

Furthermore, this research was conducted in a cross-cultural global setting. Additional research could occur to examine cross-national differences and similarities of the identified framework, to understand if these sales leadership behaviours are consistent globally, or if variations in emphasis exist in different regions of the world.

An earlier global study by Boehnke et al. (2003) found that the main dimensions of leadership behaviours for performance are universal, with only a few variations in emphasis existing among six different regions of the world. As the present study was an international study, with respondents from 12 countries, in 4 major regions in the world, an analysis occurred. Respondents' references to leadership behaviours, perceived to enable salesperson performance, were sorted into four geographical categories, following Hofstede (1984) and Boehnke et al. (2003) cultural and regional categories. It was found that there were no obvious regional

variations, except for a slightly greater emphasis on the challenging behaviour in some regions, versus others. This variation in emphasis on the challenging behaviour and other leadership behaviours identified, might reflect a cultural difference that could be of interest to future research.

Overall there is opportunity to advance our understanding of sales performance (Evans et al., 2012). Perceptions of the practice of leadership behaviours, based on lived experiences, have provided interesting ideas to consider and add to the literature.

7.7 Conclusion

In summary, current leadership theory does not address everything that has been described in the sales environment. The research for this thesis contributes a more textured detail of some of the behavioural categories previously described in the broader leadership domain; however, the key contribution to knowledge is in the area of sales leadership. This study contributes additional data to the existing sales literature by conducting the research in a new context; a global, complex, highly relational business to business sales organisation in uncertain market conditions. There is conflicting evidence on the appropriateness of transformational leadership in the sales environment (Arnold et al., 2009; Dubinsky et al., 1995; MacKenzie et al. 2001), however the results of this present study suggest that transformational leadership behaviours, such as coaching (individualised consideration) and challenging (intellectual stimulation) may be even more important, given the high pressure and rate of change in this modern sales environment. The current study also extends transformational leadership theory, by adding specific behaviours perceived to be important to enabling performance in this sales context – collaborating, customer engaging, championing, and candidate recruiting.

This research further contributes to the field, by providing an integrative framework of the perceptions of sales leadership behaviours, which enhance sales performance, following a social constructionist approach. The study identifies the existence of specific sales leadership behaviours that salespeople perceive to enhance salesperson performance. It also provides evidence of the

potential mediating effect of trust, confidence, optimism and resilience on salesperson performance. It identifies the importance of context in the relationship between leadership and salesperson performance. It also provides a follower centric approach, investigating both sales leaders' and sales representatives' perceptions to help better understand the relationship between leadership behaviours and salesperson performance.

Perhaps this evidence presented can be used to help encourage change in the sales environment, which is often focused on transactional leadership approaches. This data formulated a leadership framework specifically for the complex business-business sales context, and supports the use of positive, longer-term leadership behaviours, rather than simply transactional leadership behaviours. Based on these findings, organisations may develop appropriate training programmes for both the sales leaders and the sales representatives, and find ways to use the identified leadership behaviours to help create performance beyond expectations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Definition of terms and key constructs

Please find below a definition of terms and key constructs of the research question.

‘Perceptions’ A perception is an understanding. It is defined as the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted. Perceptions give us a clear view of the world, based on the respondent’s experiences. This construct underlies and influences behaviour which impacts sales performance. Perceptions can help us explore salespeople’s beliefs and experiences about leadership. Perceptions are based on experiences and provide stories to help us better understand the world from the interviewee’s point of view. Seeking to understand perspectives will help us better understand the dynamics of the leader and follower relationship.

‘Sales Leader Behaviours’ Behaviours have been defined as “what people do (the task they expend effort on) in the course of working” (Walker et al., 1979, p. 33) and therefore we can propose that sales leadership behaviours involve the execution of sales related leadership activities by sales managers and sales people. Examples of sales leadership behaviours may include coaching a sales rep on how to manage a customer problem, setting quota goals and creating a plan to achieve the results, leading a customer meeting to identify needs, identifying creative solutions to customer’s problems.

‘Enable’ For the context of my study I suggest that enable means to supply the means, knowledge or opportunity to help achieve sales performance goals.

‘Salesperson Performance’ Sales Performance has been defined as “behaviour that has been evaluated in terms of its contribution to the goals of the organisation” and sales performance reflects a qualitative review of the behaviour relative to the goals and objectives of the organisation (Walker et al., 1979, p. 33, 35).

For the context of the study, salesperson performance will be defined, based on the individual salesperson compensation plan achievement. This compensation plan includes both outcome objectives and behavioural objectives.

‘Sales Professional’ Individuals working in the sales division, including sales representatives and sales managers/sales leaders.

‘Salesperson, Sales Representative’ Customer facing individuals who are responsible for generating revenue for the organisation. These individuals do not have management responsibility for direct reports.

‘Sales Managers, Sales Leaders’ Individuals in sales management who have direct reports who are responsible for generating revenue for the organisation.

Appendix B Introduction and email sent to sample

Subject: Collaborating with a wider community of sales practitioners

Hi 'IT Company' Sales Leaders! I hope you are having a terrific weekend!

Thank you to those I have already connected with for your excitement and agreement to participate in our Cranfield University research project on sales leadership! For those of you I have yet to speak with, I'm certain you will find value in your role in this leadership project. The opportunity that (confidential name) presented to you at your last workshop is summarised below. **I would really appreciate you spending 45 minutes of your time to share your ideas on sales leadership to help develop new insights to drive 'IT Company' sales performance!**

My name is Karen Peesker and I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to each of you about your perspectives on sales leadership. I am currently a PhD student at Cranfield, however I spent the first 15 years of my career in sales at IBM and Lexmark International so I understand how busy you are right now, getting ready to close year end! While I am planning to connect with many of you in January 2015, after you make your numbers, to enhance the research process it is helpful if I interview a small number of you in October. I will reach out to each of you individually to arrange a time.

Thank you again for your help. If you have any questions in relation to the research, please let me know and I will look forward to speaking to you in the next few months!

Academic research to explore Sales Leadership and Sales Performance

- 'IT Company' sales leaders and 3 sales representatives on your team will be interviewed to explore perspectives of sales leadership.
- Empirical results of the study will be provided to the 'IT Company' to help you use leadership behaviours to enhance sales performance!
- The premise of the research fits with the 'IT Company' Master's model and puts theory into practice, using the work based learning model.
- Full confidentiality is guaranteed.
- Minimal time commitment (Only a 45min interview on Adobe CONNECT) & the learning opportunity is terrific!

Thanks again and kind regards,
Karen

Karen (Boehnke) Peesker
Researcher, Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University, UK
Principal, KAM Sales & Management Consulting, Canada
647 960 8803

Introduction email sent from initial contact

-----Original Message-----

Subject: Collaborating with a wider community of sales practitioners

Hi All!

- one is with piece of PhD research conducted by Karen Peesker on sales leadership - as mentioned she is a PhD student whom I met through Cranfield Business School. I am not sure of the timing of her research (think its required soon!) but the process and her feedback and observations could certainly find a home somewhere in your future modules- of course it's up to you. Karen will be in contact with you shortly by email to discuss next steps! In the meantime, please see the slides she has prepared for you!

Appendix C Interview protocols

C.1 Initial pilot study interview protocol, sales leader

Research Question: What sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance?

Core questions in yellow

Welcome, explain the interview purpose, explain the confidentiality of the process and obtain informed consent.

- 1) Biographical Information: Age, role, highest level of education, time in sales, sales leader. etc
- 2) Please describe what constitutes exceptional salesperson performance in your business, is there anything else?
- 3) Are there any other aspects that are formally considered part of salesperson performance in “IT company”?
- 4) Could you please describe in your own words, what constitutes high salesperson performance for you specifically? (Please consider outcome and behavioural sales performance).
- 5) Based on your experience, how does a sales leader enable salesperson’s performance?
- 6) In your view, how do you as a sales leader facilitate/enable salesperson’s performance? Tell me more
- 7) How might you as a sales leader hinder salesperson’s performance? Tell me more
- 8) Think of your immediate sales leader or another sales leader. What could she or he do to help you improve your performance in sales? For example what would you like your own manager to do more of? Less of? Why?
- 9) What specific actions/behaviours can a sales leader do to enable sales performance?
- 10) Is there anything else that we may have missed in terms of sales leadership behaviours and the way in which to account for achieving high sales performance?

Probes will be used for elaboration and to clarify during analysis. Also the researcher will demonstrate effective listening skills. Examples of probes for elaboration:

“Could you elaborate on this...?” “Could you be more specific..?” “Was this expected...?”

“Could you tell me more about ...?” “Can you give me an example?”

“What do you mean by that?”

C.2 Final interview protocol, sales leader

Research Question: What sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance?

Core questions in yellow

Welcome, explain the interview purpose: to explore sales professional's perceptions of leadership behaviours that enable sales performance, explain the confidentiality of the process and obtain informed consent.

- 1) Demographic information: Age, role, highest level of education, time in sales/sales leader. What percentage of your time do you spend actually selling? etc.
- 2) Please describe what constitutes exceptional salesperson performance in your business, is there anything else?
- 3) Are there any other aspects that are formally considered part of salesperson performance at your company?
- 4) Could you please describe in your own words, what constitutes high salesperson performance for you specifically? (Please consider outcome and behavioural sales performance).
- 5) Based on your experience, how does a sales leader enable salesperson's performance?
- 6) In your view, how do you as a sales leader facilitate/enable salesperson's performance? Tell me more
- 7) How might you as a sales leader hinder salesperson's performance? Tell me more..
- 8) Think of your immediate sales leader or another sales leader. What could she or he do to help you improve your performance in sales? For example, what would you like your own manager to do more of? Less of? Why?
- 9) What specific actions/behaviours can a sales leader do to enable sales performance?
- 10) Is there anything else that we may have missed in terms of sales leadership behaviours and the way in which to account for achieving high sales performance?
- 11) Can you please summarise the top 5 leadership behaviours that you perceive to enable salesperson performance?

Probes will be used for elaboration and to clarify during analysis. Also the researcher will demonstrate effective listening skills. Examples of probes for elaboration:

"Could you elaborate on this...?" "Could you be more specific..?" "Was this expected...?"

"Could you tell me more about ...?" "Can you give me an example?"

"What do you mean by that?"

C.3 Initial pilot study interview protocol, sales representative

Research Question: What sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance?

Core questions in yellow

Welcome, explain the interview purpose, explain the confidentiality of the process and obtain informed consent.

- 1) Please describe your role and responsibilities within the company.
- 2) Please define who you report to and who you define as your sales leader.
- 3) Please describe what constitutes exceptional salesperson performance in your business, is there anything else?
- 4) Are there any other aspects that are formally considered part of salesperson performance in “IT company”?
- 5) Could you please describe in your own words, what constitutes high salesperson performance for you? (Please consider outcome and behavioural sales performance).
- 6) Based on your experience how does a sales leader influence salesperson’s performance?
- 7) In your view how does your sales leader facilitate/enable salesperson’s performance?
Tell me more
- 8) How might your sales leader hinder salesperson’s performance? Tell me more
- 9) Think of your immediate sales leader or another sales leader. What could she or he do to help you improve your performance in sales? For example, what would you like your own manager to do more of? Less of? Why?
- 10) Think about what actions/behaviours sales managers can do to enable sales performance?
- 11) Is there anything else that we may have missed in terms of sales leadership behaviours and the way in which to account for achieving high sales performance?

Probes will be used for elaboration and to clarify during analysis. Also the researcher will demonstrate effective listening skills. Examples of probes for elaboration:

“Could you elaborate on this...?” “Could you be more specific..?” “Was this expected...?”

“Could you tell me more about ...?” “Can you give me an example?”

“What do you mean by that?”

C.4 Final interview protocol, sales representative

Research Question: What sales leadership behaviours are perceived to enable salesperson performance?

Core questions in yellow

Welcome, explain the interview purpose: to explore sales professional's perceptions of leadership behaviours that enable sales performance, explain the confidentiality of the process and obtain informed consent.

- 1) Demographic information: Age, role, highest level of education, time in sales/sales leader. What percentage of your time do you spend actually selling? etc.
- 2) Please describe what constitutes exceptional salesperson performance in your business, is there anything else?
- 3) Are there any other aspects that are formally considered part of salesperson performance at your company?
- 4) Could you please describe in your own words, what constitutes high salesperson performance for you specifically? (Please consider outcome and behavioural sales performance).
- 5) Based on your experience, how does a sales leader enable salesperson's performance?
- 6) In your view, how does your sales leader facilitate/enable salesperson's performance?
Tell me more
- 7) How might your sales leader hinder salesperson's performance? Tell me more..
- 8) Think of your immediate sales leader or another sales leader. What could she or he do to help you improve your performance in sales? For example what would you like your own manager to do more of? Less of? Why?
- 9) What specific actions/behaviours can a sales leader do to enable sales performance?
- 10) Is there anything else that we may have missed in terms of sales leadership behaviours and the way in which to account for achieving high sales performance?
- 11) Can you please summarise the top 5 leadership behaviours that you perceive to enable salesperson performance?

Probes will be used for elaboration and to clarify during analysis. Also the researcher will demonstrate effective listening skills. Examples of probes for elaboration:

"Could you elaborate on this...?" "Could you be more specific..?" "Was this expected...?"

"Could you tell me more about ...?" "Can you give me an example?"

"What do you mean by that?"

Appendix D Data codebooks

D.1 Start list, sales leaders

Table D-1 Start list, sales leaders

Phase 1 - Sales Leaders - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Accessibility, be available	3	6
Analysis of the Situation	2	5
Anticipate Problems	3	4
Appreciation	1	3
Ask Questions regarding indicators of performance	3	4
Be Humble	3	5
Behaviours that Hinder Sales Performance	9	31
Belief in what you are doing	1	4
Celebrate Success	2	4
Challenging	5	12
Coach vs Micromanage	3	3
Coaching	8	60
Coaching - the art of sales	1	1
Coaching - the science of sales (process)	1	3
Coaching - to understand the problem and involve them in solution	2	3
Coaching ask what do they want to be coached on	4	7
Coaching -first get them to understand the why	1	1
Coaching get people to tell their story	3	4
Coaching individualized	6	12
Coaching on activity	5	10
Coaching on the Customer Deal	6	19
Coaching on the sales territory and quota	1	1
Coaching questions to get self-coaching	3	5
Coaching the change process	1	2
Coaching the Funnel	1	1
Coaching the loss	1	3
Coaching to build trust	3	6
Coaching to Forecast effectively	3	3

Phase 1 - Sales Leaders - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Coaching to get people to think differently	2	4
Coaching to get the rep to own it - it is his idea	1	1
Coaching to Help Fix a Problem	4	9
Coaching to make the numbers	1	2
Coaching to prioritise	2	9
Coaching with Leading and Lagging Indicators	4	14
Coaching with meeting reports	2	3
Coaching, developmental	5	7
Collaborate	2	7
Collaboration, Encourage Collaboration	4	9
Collaboration, Facilitate	7	12
Collaboration, Model Collaboration	3	3
Comfort Zone - push out of it	1	2
Commitment to Customer Value	3	8
Communication	3	4
Confidence	6	12
Connect People	2	3
Control Administrative Work	1	1
Create space for reflection	3	6
Culture	1	2
Customer Centricity & Engagement	6	18
Customer Engagement - question your involvement as a sales leader	1	1
Customer Engagement - Shadowing and Role Playing (Executive Sponsorship)	1	4
Customer Engagement, customer meetings	5	16
Customer Engagement, pipeline building for execs	2	7
Customer Engagement, PROSPECT Engagement for Execs	2	10
Define a Best Practice Sales Process	1	4
Define own role as helper and or facilitator	2	3
Do not micromanage	2	2
Empowerment	2	3
Enable Focus	1	2
Enable Social Selling	1	2
Encourage cooperation	1	1

Phase 1 - Sales Leaders - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Encourage new ideas	1	1
Encourage openness and seeking help	1	1
Exceptional Sales Performance - Behaviour	9	62
Exceptional Sales Performance - Outcome	8	19
Feedback - Ask for feedback from team	1	1
Feedback, provide feedback	2	2
Feedback, Seek Feedback, Ask for Feedback	4	6
Fix and support vs inspect ask and control	1	1
Give Respect	3	5
Give responsibility	1	2
Give room and don't intervene prematurely	2	3
Goal Setting	4	6
Industry Knowledge	1	2
Inspection Culture	2	4
Inspiring	4	7
Integrity	1	1
Internal Problem Solving	5	7
Leading from the Front... i.e. I'm going over there, who wants to go with me - great leader	3	4
Learning	5	14
Leveraging resources	4	7
Listen actively don't tell	5	12
Look for exceptions, outside comfort zones	2	2
Mentoring	2	4
Micromanagement	3	3
Modern Sales Environment	7	28
Motivation	2	4
Networking - External	4	7
Networking - Internal	6	11
Not Listening to the sales rep	2	5
Onboarding	1	2
Pressure	7	14
Protecting Behaviour	8	19

Phase 1 - Sales Leaders - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Quarter Focus - too much focus on the quarter, vs. long-term business	1	1
Read about your profession	2	3
Recognizing	2	5
Recruiting, ask questions	2	5
Recruiting, building an effective recruiting process, hire right	3	25
Recruiting, expectation of follow up thank you note etc.	1	3
Recruiting, meet formally	1	2
Recruiting, meet informally	1	3
Recruiting, observe interactions with others	2	5
Recruiting, reciprocate	1	2
Recruiting, share personal information	1	3
Recruiting, team interviews	1	3
Removing Barriers (Sales Enablement)	4	13
Resilience	2	2
Rewarding	3	5
Role Model	4	4
Sales Enablement	7	31
Sales Performance - measuring leading and lagging indicators	4	5
Sales Processes	2	2
Sales Tools	1	2
Ideas for improvement	6	24
Values	3	4
Seek Feedback	3	6
Selling Behaviours	2	2
Selling in disruptive environment	2	2
Servant Leadership	1	4
Set Expectations	4	5
Setting a Target	2	4
Share Best Practices	5	12
Sounding board for brainstorming of ideas	1	1
Stimulating	4	11
Strategic business planning	2	5
Strategy	1	2

Phase 1 - Sales Leaders - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Support your people	6	11
Team building	8	33
Transactional culture	2	3
Transparency in decision making	2	6
Trust	6	19
Trust, demonstrate trust	2	2
Visioning	7	29

D.2 Start list, sales representatives

Table D-2 Start list, sales representatives

Phase 1 - Sales Representatives - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded`	Units of Meaning Coded
Accessibility	5	7
Activity	1	1
Advocating	3	6
Back up your salespeople	3	4
Be Tough with your sales guys	1	2
Behaviours that Hinder Sales Performance	18	76
Bring Together Expert Resources to support the deal	1	2
Carrot and Stick Leaders	3	8
Celebrate Success	2	4
Challenge you and create constructive tension	6	22
Clear roadblocks	1	1
Coaching	11	24
Coaching - asking questions, coaching questions	8	15
Coaching - ask what do they want to be coached on today	1	1
Coaching - career development & developmental	5	8
Coaching - mentoring hours	2	2
Coaching - Personal Coaching	1	3
Coaching by sales cycles (large deal vs small deal)	1	3
Coaching guidance	1	4
Coaching individualised	6	15
Coaching on sales territory and quota	4	5
Coaching on Social Media	1	1
Coaching on the Customer Deal	6	13
Coaching the sales call	2	3
Coaching the sales process	3	3
Coaching the sales strategy	1	1
Coaching the team	2	3
Coaching to get people to think differently	2	4
Coaching to give people options	1	1
Coaching to Solve Problems	1	1

Phase 1 - Sales Representatives - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded`	Units of Meaning Coded
Coaching vs micromanaging	1	2
Coaching with leading and lagging indicators coaching a call plan	1	4
Collaborate	5	9
Collaborate - Model Collaboration	0	0
Collaborate - peer to peer	1	5
Collaborate, Encourage Collaboration	7	12
Collaborate, Facilitate	8	18
Communication	5	8
Confidence	6	13
Consistency	1	4
Context of business	1	1
Correcting	3	4
Create a sense of urgency	1	1
Creating happy employees	2	4
Customer Engagement- building customer relationships	12	47
Customer Engagement - Customer Meetings	10	17
Customer Engagement - Executive alignment	4	13
Customer Engagement - hands on for customer deals	1	1
Customer Engagement - understanding the deal	3	3
Customer Engagement Adding Value	2	2
Customer Relationship - Good relationship with customers	1	1
Deal Shaping (data technology deep dives)	1	5
Deal Support	2	5
Defend your reps	1	1
Do not micromanage	3	7
Embrace new ideas, develop new ideas, creativity, innovation	4	11
Emotional	1	1
Empathy	1	6
Engaging Internally	1	1
Escalations	4	7
Exceptional Sales Performance - Behaviour	18	96
Exceptional Sales Performance - Outcome	16	40
Exceptional Sales Performance - Respondent	8	10

Phase 1 - Sales Representatives - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded`	Units of Meaning Coded
Exceptional Sales performance-definition	7	8
Experience in Sales	2	2
Explains Why he wants to go this way	1	1
Facilitate learning	1	2
Facilitating Internal Networking	1	1
Fairness and Transparency	3	9
Fast Start	1	1
Fast Start - Territory and Patch Setting	1	1
Feedback	1	1
Feedback, provide feedback	1	1
Feedback, seek feedback	3	3
Focus	4	12
Gets involved	2	4
Give Freedom	1	1
Going on sales calls	1	1
Greater connect between HR and Sales	1	6
helping	1	1
honest and integrity	3	3
Individualized Leadership	2	2
Information	1	1
Inspiring and Motivating	10	21
Internal - career development	2	2
Internal - navigate manage internal complexity	5	12
Internal Champion	4	7
Internal Negotiations	1	4
Lead by Example	2	2
Learning and Education and personal development - sharpen the saw	8	13
Leverage Talent	1	1
Listening	2	3
Make it fun	3	8
Manage Internal Stakeholders	1	1
Manage the Complexity both externally and internally	1	1
Managing the Loss	1	8

Phase 1 - Sales Representatives - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded`	Units of Meaning Coded
Modern Sales Environment	8	28
More Humane with people skills	1	1
Networking - External	3	4
Networking - Internal	4	9
Not blaming	1	1
Optimism	5	16
Orchestrator of team for the client (quarterback)	10	19
Passionate	2	3
People Skills	1	1
Pressure	10	17
Protecting and Shielding and or Filtering Protecting from Noise	14	57
Provide Sales tools	1	1
Recognition	4	4
Recruiting	3	4
Reducing administration surrounding the deal	1	1
Remove barriers (barrier breakers)	2	6
Resilience	1	1
Resilience 1	1	5
Respect	3	7
Rewarding	5	9
Sales Empathy	1	1
Sales Enablement	9	13
Sales Leader - experience in sales, leveraging the experience	5	12
Ideas for improvement	7	28
Selling Behaviour	1	1
Set Boundaries to Enable Reps to Focus on Selling	1	2
Set Clear Expectations	5	6
Share information	1	1
Sharing Experiences and Best Practices	5	15
Spreadsheet management and reporting	4	7
Stimulating	10	12
Supportive	7	19
Team building	12	38

Phase 1 - Sales Representatives - Start List	Semi-structured interviews Coded`	Units of Meaning Coded
Trust	9	30
Understanding needs of the customer	1	1
Understanding the salesperson	1	1
Visioning	5	6
Why Sales is different, why it requires different leadership	6	13
Willingness to get involved	1	1
Work life balance	1	3

D.3 Data display, sales leaders

Table D-3 Data display, sales leaders

Phase 2 - Sales Leaders - Data Display	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
C1 - Exceptional Sales Performance	12	143
Exceptional Sales Performance – Behaviour	12	101
Sales Performance – Behaviours	4	25
Exceptional Sales Performance – Outcome	11	42
C2 - Leader Behaviours that Enable Sales Performance	12	781
Candidate Recruiting Leader Behaviour	4	55
Onboarding	1	2
Recruiting, build an effective recruiting process	4	53
Challenging Leadership Behaviour	7	24
Encourages Analysis	4	13
Fosters Creativity	2	5
Stimulating	3	6
Championing Leader Behaviour	11	99
Internal Champion and Problem Solving	5	17
Learning	9	43
Protecting or Filtering	9	39
Coaching Leader Behaviour	12	312
Coaching	12	312
Collaborating Leader Behaviour	12	137
Collaborating	12	137
Creating Vision Leader Behaviour	12	51
Role Modelling	7	7
Strategic planning	3	10
Visioning	10	34
Customer Engaging Leader Behaviour	10	68

Phase 2 - Sales Leaders - Data Display	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
Customer Engagement	10	68
Inspiring Leader Behaviour	8	18
Inspiring	8	18
Rewarding Leader Behaviour	7	17
Recognising	6	12
Rewarding	3	5
C3 - Leadership Behaviours that Hinder Salesperson Performance	12	89
Correcting Leader Behaviour	3	8
Inspecting Leader Behaviour	1	3
Customer Engagement Hindering Leader Behaviours	3	5
Not adding value in customer engagement	1	1
Not Listening to the client	1	3
Super AE approach - step in to save the deal	1	1
Demonstrating a lack of trust in sales representative	2	4
Focused only on the numbers	8	17
Personal KPI Driven Leader Behaviours	4	5
Rewarding Blue Birds	1	4
Lack of Vision	1	2
Micromanaging Leader Behaviour	6	14
Controlling	1	1
Micromanaging deal reviews	1	1
Micromanagement	1	3
Spreadsheet Management and reporting	2	2
Negatively impacting sales representative's confidence	1	2
Lack of Coaching	3	4
Lack of Collaborating or Sharing Ideas	2	3
Lack of Listening to the Sales Reps	4	6

Phase 2 - Sales Leaders - Data Display	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
Lack of Championing (Not Supporting the Team)	3	8
Blaming	1	3
Not pushing back as a sales leader	3	4
Pushing Reps to do Unproductive Tasks	5	7
Pressuring (Fear based leadership)	3	9
Short Term Focus	2	5
C4 – Mediators	8	36
Confidence	5	14
Belief in what you are doing	1	4
Trust	6	22
Trust, demonstrate trust	3	3
C5 - Modern Complex Sales Environment	12	80
IT Company values	5	13
Modern complex sales environment	8	27
Disruptive environment	1	1
Pressure	6	19
Agility	1	1
Stretching people too much	1	1
Transactional culture	5	21
Management by the numbers	2	5
Quarter Focus - too much focus on the quarter, vs. long term	3	5
C6- IT Company Ideas for Improvement	6	24
IT Company Ideas for Improvement	6	24

D.4 Data display, sales representatives

Table D-4 Data display, sales representatives

Phase 2 - Sales Representatives - Data Display	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
C1 - Exceptional Sales Performance	18	136
Exceptional Sales Performance - Behaviour	18	96
Sales Performance Behaviours	19	92
Exceptional Sales Performance - Outcome	16	40
Exceptional Sales performance - IT Company definition	13	35
C2- Leader Behaviours that Enable Sales Performance	24	1127
Candidate Recruiting	3	4
Build an effective recruiting process	3	4
Challenging Leader Behaviour	17	74
Challenge (Create Constructive Tension)	6	22
Foster Creativity	6	13
Stimulating	15	39
Championing Leader Behaviour	24	220
Internal Champion	16	82
Learning	14	34
Protecting, Shielding, Filtering, Advocating	18	104
Coaching Leader Behaviour	24	318
Coaching the Sales Process	16	77
Coaching, Individualised	24	241
Collaborating Leader Behaviour	24	250
Collaborate, Encourage Collaboration	14	58
Collaborate, Facilitate	23	172
Collaborate, Model Collaboration	10	20
Creating Vision Leader Behaviour	15	40

Phase 2 - Sales Representatives - Data Display	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
Role modelling	6	11
Strategic planning	2	4
Visioning	13	25
Customer Engaging Leader Behaviour	21	162
Customer Engagement, Building customer relationships	14	65
Customer Engagement, Working with the Sales Team	18	97
Inspiring Leader Behaviour	14	37
Inspiring and Motivating	13	33
Passionate	3	4
Rewarding Leader Behaviour	10	22
Recognising Leader Behaviour	6	10
Rewarding	8	12
C3 - Leader Behaviours that Hinder Sales Performance	22	149
Behaviours that Hinder Sales Performance	22	149
Avoiding Leader Behaviour	2	3
Carrot and Stick Leadership	3	8
Correcting Leader Behaviour	4	9
Focused on own numbers, separate to team	1	5
Lack of Coaching	1	4
Lack of Collaboration	3	6
Micromanagement	4	9
Spreadsheet management and reporting	8	29
C4 – Mediators	17	83
Confidence	11	21
Optimism	5	16
Resilience	4	9
Resilience	2	3

Phase 2 - Sales Representatives - Data Display	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
Trust	12	37
Emotional	1	1
C5 - Modern Complex Sales Environment	20	77
Context of IT Company business	1	1
Modern Sales Environment	15	50
Pace of change	1	3
Short-Term Focus Result	2	6
Why Sales is different, why it requires different leadership	6	13
Pressure	14	26
Making the numbers because sales reps are pushy	1	2
C6 - IT Company Ideas for Improvement	7	34
IT Company Ideas for improvement	7	34
Greater connect between HR and Sales	1	6

D.5 Data reduction, sales leaders

Table D-5 Data reduction, sales leaders

Phase 3 - Sales Leaders - Data Display	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
C1- Leader Behaviours that Enable Sales Performance	12	781
Candidate Recruiting Leader Behaviour	4	55
Challenging Leadership Behaviour	7	24
Championing Leader Behaviour	11	99
Coaching Leader Behaviour	12	312
Collaborating Leader Behaviour	12	137
Creating Vision Leader Behaviour	12	51
Customer Engaging Leader Behaviour	10	68
Inspiring Leader Behaviour	8	18
Rewarding Leader Behaviour	7	17
C2 – Mediators	8	36
Confidence	5	14
Trust	6	22

D.6 Data reduction, sales representatives

Table D-6 Data reduction, sales representatives

Phase 3 - Sales Representatives - Data Display	Semi-structured interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
C1- Leader Behaviours that Enable Sales Performance	24	1127
Candidate Recruiting	3	4
Challenging Leader Behaviour	17	74
Championing Leader Behaviour	24	220
Coaching Leader Behaviour	24	318
Collaborating Leader Behaviour	24	250
Creating Vision Leader Behaviour	15	40
Customer Engaging Leader Behaviour	21	162
Inspiring Leader Behaviour	14	37
Rewarding Leader Behaviour	9	22
C2 – Mediators	17	83
Confidence	11	21
Optimism	5	16
Resilience	4	9
Trust	12	37

D.7 NVivo screen shots, data display and data reduction

Sales Leadership and Sales Performance.nvp - NVivo Pro

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Nodes

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Nodes

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- New Consolidated Main
 - Sales Leaders
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 - Sales Representatives
- Pilot
- Cases
 - Cases
 - Relationships
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Sources

Nodes

Classifications

Collections

Queries

Reports

Maps

Folders

KMP 203 Items

Sales Leaders

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Coaching Leader Behaviour		12	312	5/11/2016 8:45 AM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Coaching		12	312	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/30/2016 9:26 AM
Coaching, Individualized		12	225	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Challenging, Pushing out of comfort zones		5	12	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	10/11/2016 10:51 AM
Coaching, developmental		11	83	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	10/11/2016 10:52 AM
Coaching, Individuals		10	77	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Create space for reflection		2	4	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Goal Setting		3	4	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Supportive Coaching		9	41	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Coaching, the Sales Process		9	87	5/24/2016 4:40 PM	KMP	5/24/2016 4:40 PM
Coaching, the Art of Coaching (Customer Engagement)		7	22	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:31 PM
Coaching, the Science of Coaching (Metrics)		7	65	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:30 PM
Collaborating Leader Behaviour		12	137	5/11/2016 8:47 AM	KMP	10/3/2016 4:38 PM
Collaborating		12	137	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	10/3/2016 4:44 PM
Collaboration, Encourage Collaboration		11	59	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Encourage Collaboration and Team Building		10	51	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/24/2016 12:19 PM
Collaboration, Facilitate Collaboration		12	62	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/24/2016 11:52 AM
Networking Leader Behaviours		9	28	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/24/2016 11:21 AM
Share Best Practices		6	21	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/24/2016 12:36 PM
Support your people		1	2	5/5/2016 1:37 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Collaboration, Model Collaboration		7	16	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Define own role as helper and or facilitator		1	1	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Encourage cooperation		1	1	5/4/2016 12:06 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM

Windows Taskbar: 4:52 PM 10/20/2016

Figure D-1 NVivo screen shot, data display sales leaders

Sales Leadership and Sales Performance.nvp - NVivo Pro

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Workspace Item Clipboard Format Paragraph Styles Editing Proofing

Nodes Look for Search In Sales Represent Find Now Clear Advanced Find

Sales Representatives

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Coaching the Sales Process		16	77 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching the Art of Sales (Customer Engagement)		13	47 5/25/2016 8:26 AM	KMP	10/20/2016 4:54 PM	KMP
Coaching - the sales process		5	17 5/12/2016 11:43 AM	KMP	10/13/2016 9:38 PM	KMP
Coaching on the Customer Deal		8	17 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/13/2016 9:39 PM	KMP
Coaching the sales strategy		1	1 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Managing the Loss		1	8 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Sales Empathy		1	4 5/12/2016 11:43 AM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching the Science of Sales (Metrics)		10	27 5/25/2016 8:25 AM	KMP	10/20/2016 4:53 PM	KMP
Activity		1	1 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching by sales cycles (large deal vs small deal)		1	3 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching on Sales Territory and Quota		9	19 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching with leading and lagging indicators coaching a call pl		1	4 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching, Individualized		24	241 5/24/2016 4:36 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching		16	40 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching - asking questions, coaching questions		7	14 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching - ask what do they want to be coached on today		1	1 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching - Career Development		9	22 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching - Mentoring		2	2 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching - Personal Coaching		5	16 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/13/2016 9:39 PM	KMP
Coaching guidance		4	13 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching Individualized		11	35 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching on Social Media		1	1 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching to get people to think differently		2	4 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching to Give People Options		1	1 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP
Coaching to Solve Problems		3	3 5/10/2016 9:08 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM	KMP

KMP 236 Items

Ask me anything

5:16 PM 10/20/2016

Figure D-2 NVivo screen shot, data display sales representatives

Sales Leadership and Sales Performance.nvp - NVivo Pro

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Workspace Item Clipboard Editing Proofing

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 - Sales Leaders
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- New Consolidated Main
 - Sales Leaders
 - Sales Representatives
- Pilot
- Cases
 - Cases
 - Relationships
 - Node Matrices

Sales Leaders

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
C1 - Leader Behaviours that Enable Sales Performance		12	781	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	10/13/2016 9:47 PM
Candidate Recruiting Leader Behaviour		4	55	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	5/30/2016 10:03 AM
Challenging Leadership Behaviour		7	24	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	5/30/2016 10:01 AM
Championing Leader Behaviour		11	99	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	5/25/2016 7:55 AM
Coaching Leader Behaviour		12	312	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Collaborating Leader Behaviour		12	137	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	10/3/2016 4:38 PM
Creating Vision Leader Behaviour		12	51	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	6/29/2016 1:05 PM
Customer Engaging Leader Behaviour		10	68	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	5/25/2016 8:08 AM
Inspiring Leader Behaviour		8	18	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
Rewarding Leader Behaviour		7	17	10/13/2016 9:45 PM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM
C2 - Moderators		8	36	10/6/2016 10:45 AM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:48 AM
Confidence		5	14	10/6/2016 10:45 AM	KMP	5/24/2016 12:37 PM
Trust		6	22	10/6/2016 10:45 AM	KMP	5/23/2016 12:21 PM

Sources

Nodes

Classifications

Collections

Queries

Reports

Maps

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KMP 142 Items

Ask me anything

4:58 PM 10/20/2016

Figure D-3 NVivo screen shot, data reduction, sales leaders

Sales Leadership and Sales Performance.nvp - NVivo Pro

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Workspace Item Clipboard

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Nodes

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 - New Consolidated Main
 - Sales Leaders
 - Sales Representatives
 - New Consolidated Main
 - Sales Leaders
 - Sales Representatives
 - Pilot
 - Cases
 - Cases
 - Relationships
 - Node Matrices

Sales Representatives

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
C1- Leader Behaviours that Enable Sales Performance		24	1127	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/13/2016 9:48 PM
Candidate Recruiting		3	4	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
Challenging Leader Behaviour		17	74	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
Championing Leader Behaviour		24	220	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
Coaching Leader Behaviour		24	318	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
Collaborating Leader Behaviour		24	250	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
Creating Vision Leader Behaviour		15	40	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
Customer Engaging Leader Behaviour		21	162	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
Inspiring Leader Behaviour		14	37	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
Rewarding Leader Behaviour		10	22	10/13/2016 9:47 PM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:09 AM
C2 - Moderators		17	83	10/6/2016 10:47 AM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:48 AM
Confidence		11	21	10/6/2016 10:47 AM	KMP	5/14/2016 2:16 PM
Optimism		5	16	10/6/2016 10:47 AM	KMP	2/25/2016 6:26 AM
Resilience		4	9	10/6/2016 10:47 AM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:20 AM
Trust		12	37	10/6/2016 10:47 AM	KMP	10/6/2016 10:27 AM

KMP 163 Items

Ask me anything

4:58 PM 10/20/2016

Figure D-4 NVivo screen shot, data reduction sales representatives

D.8 Interrater test -sample of report

Code	Source	Source Folder	Source Size	Kappa
Recruiting, ask questions	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0.1434
Recruiting, ask questions	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Recruiting, building an effective recruiting process, hire right	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0.2239
Recruiting, building an effective recruiting process, hire right	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	0
Recruiting, expectation of follow up thank you note etc.	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0
Recruiting, expectation of follow up thank you note etc.	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Recruiting, meet formally	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0.983
Recruiting, meet formally	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Recruiting, meet informally	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0.4477
Recruiting, meet informally	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Recruiting, observe interactions with others	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0.1891
Recruiting, observe interactions with others	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Recruiting, reciprocate	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Recruiting, reciprocate	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Recruiting, share personal information	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	-0.0144
Recruiting, share personal information	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Recruiting, team interviews	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0

Code	Source	Source Folder	Source Size	Kappa
Recruiting, team interviews	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Removing Barriers (Sales Enablement)	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0.0679
Removing Barriers (Sales Enablement)	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Sales Enablement	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Sales Performance - measuring leading and lagging indicators	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Sales Performance - measuring leading and lagging indicators	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	0
Sales Processes	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Sales Processes	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Sales Tools	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Sales Tools	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
ideas for improvement	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0
ideas for improvement	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Values	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Values	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Seek Feedback	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0.856
Seek Feedback	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	0
Share Best Practices	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Sounding board for brainstorming of ideas	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0
Sounding board for brainstorming of ideas	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1

Code	Source	Source Folder	Source Size	Kappa
Stimulating	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0.3124
Stimulating	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Strategic business planning	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Strategic business planning	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Strategy	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Support your people	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Support your people	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Team building	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	0
Team building	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	0
Transactional culture	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Transactional culture	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	0
Transparency in decision making	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Transparency in decision making	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Trust	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Trust	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	0
Trust, demonstrate trust	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Trust, demonstrate trust	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	1
Visioning	Participant10 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	10825 chars	1
Visioning	Participant11 SL M	Internals\\Inter-rater Reliability Testing	33407 chars	0
				0.75

Appendix E Data coding tool, NVivo

E.1 Ability to track, NVivo

The screenshot displays the NVivo Pro software interface. The top menu bar includes FILE, HOME, CREATE, DATA, ANALYZE, QUERY, EXPLORE, LAYOUT, and VIEW. Below the menu is a ribbon with various tool icons. The main workspace is divided into three panes: Nodes, Sources, and Reports. The Nodes pane on the left shows a hierarchical tree of nodes, with 'Sales Leaders' selected. The central pane displays a table of coded content for the 'Sales Leaders' node, listing various sub-nodes and their associated sources and references. A blue callout box with white text is overlaid on the table, stating: 'Coded Content Ability to identify data in each code and go back into the transcript to confirm meaning and thoughts.' The right pane shows a detailed view of the selected 'Coaching' node, displaying a list of references with their coverage percentages and the corresponding text excerpts. A blue arrow points from the 'Coaching' node in the table to the detailed view on the right. The bottom status bar shows the user's name (KMP), the number of items (203), and the current time (3:01 PM on 10/20/2016).

Name	Sources	References
C2 - Leader Behaviours that Enable Sales Performance	12	781
Coaching Leader Behaviour	12	312
Coaching	12	312
Coaching, Individualized	12	225
Coaching, the Sales Process	9	87
Collaborating Leader Behaviour	12	137
Championing Leader Behaviour	11	99
Customer Engaging Leader Behaviour	10	68
Candidate Recruiting Leader Behaviour	4	55
Creating Vision Leader Behaviour	12	51
Challenging Leadership Behaviour	7	24
Inspiring Leader Behaviour	8	18
Rewarding Leader Behaviour	7	17
C1 - Exceptional Sales Performance	12	143
C3 - Leadership Behaviours that Hinder Salesperson Performance	12	89

Drag selection here to code to a new node

Enter node name (CTRL+Q)

Figure E-1 Ability to Track using NVivo

E.2 Demographics, NVivo

Demographics at a Glance

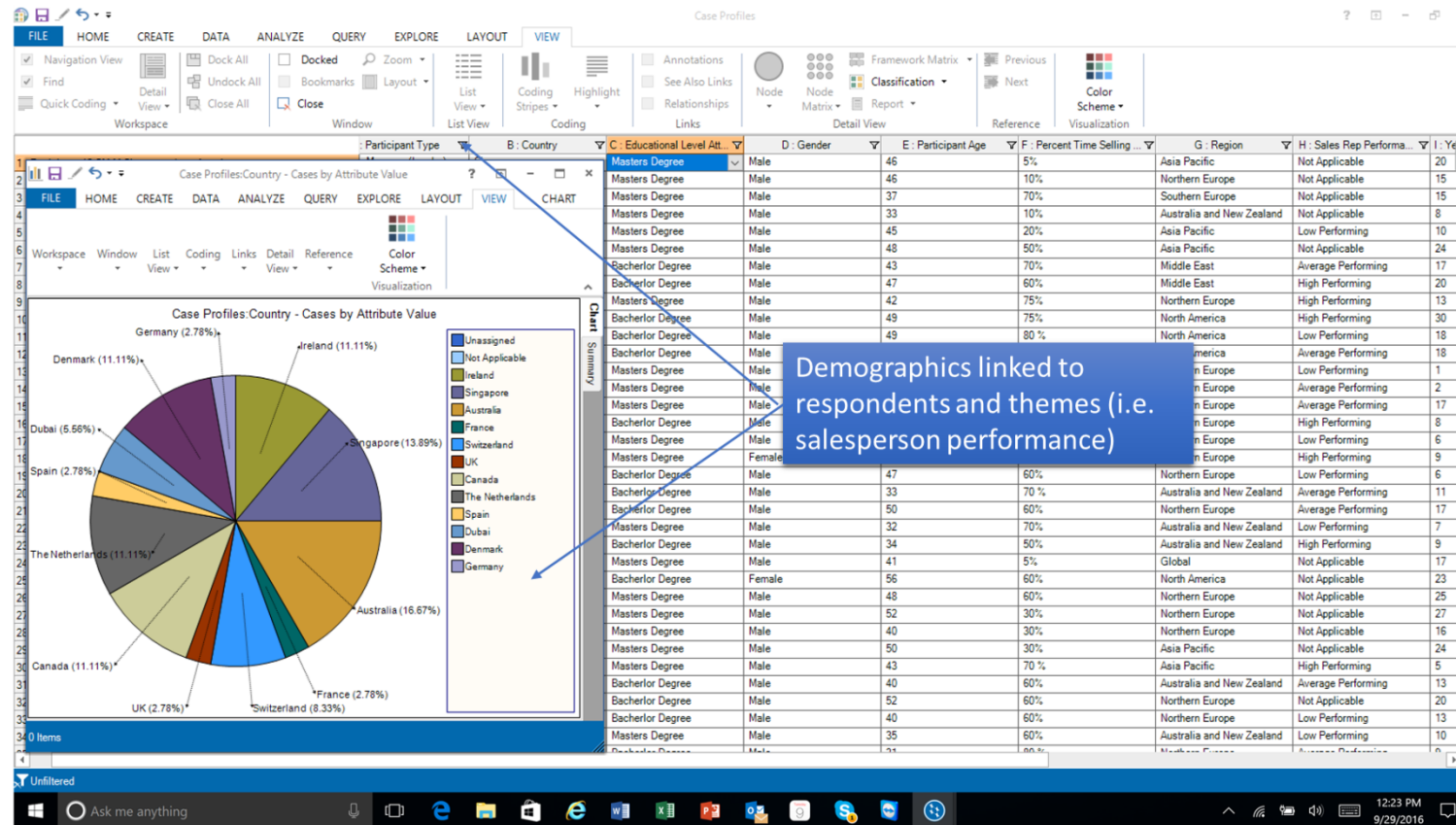


Figure E-2 Demographics at a glance

E.3 Coding queries, NVivo

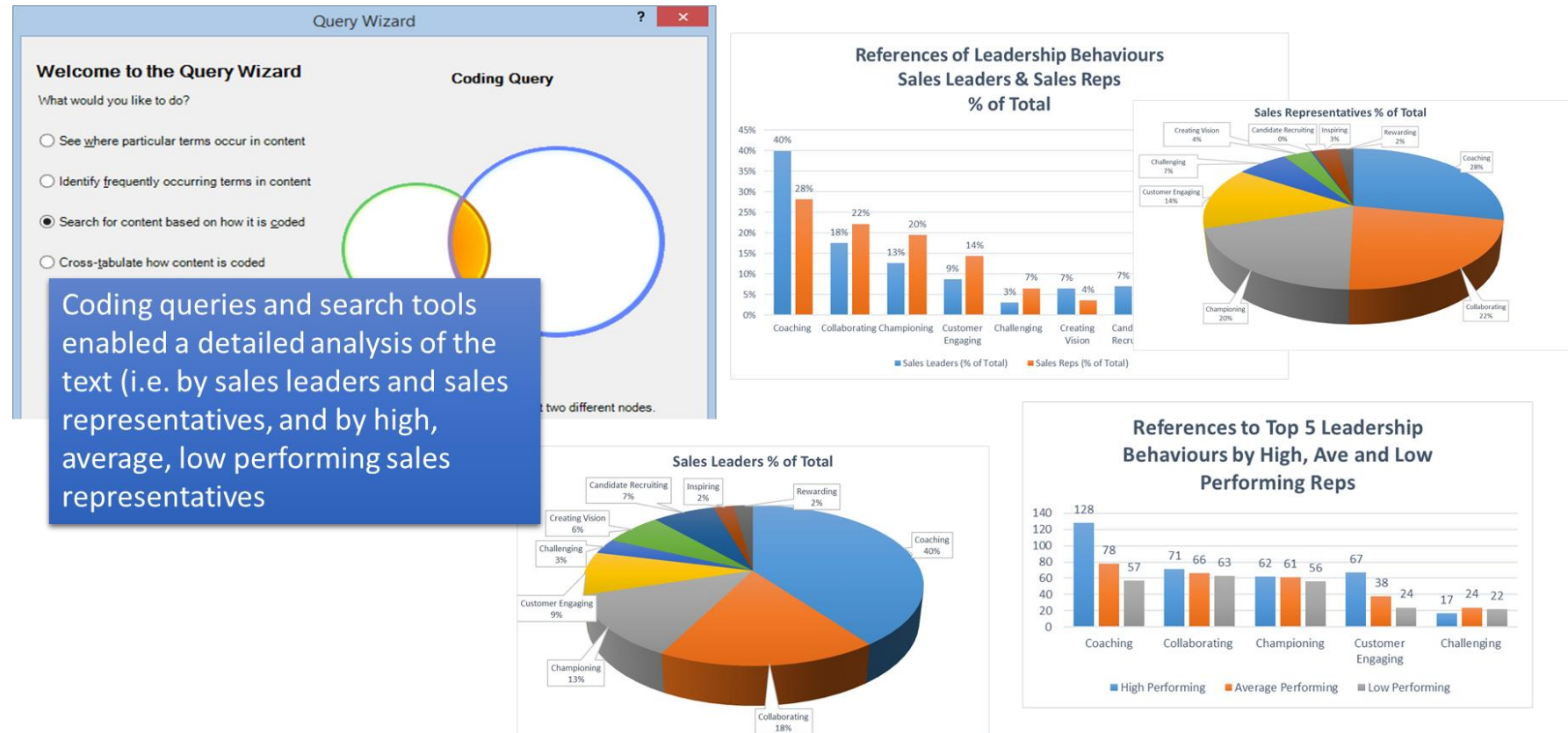


Figure E-3 Example of Coding queries

E.4 Memo links, NVivo

Example of Memo Linked to Coded Content

Sales Leaders

Name	Sources	References
C2 - Leader Behaviours that Enable Sales Performance	12	781
Coaching Leader Behaviour	12	312
Collaborating Leader Behaviour	12	137
Championing Leader Behaviour	11	99
Customer Engaging Leader Behaviour	10	68
Candidate Recruiting Leader Behaviour	4	55
Creating Vision Leader Behaviour	12	51
Challenging Leadership Behaviour	7	24
Inquiring Leader Behaviour	8	18
Rewarding Leader Behaviour	7	17
C1 - Exceptional Sales Performance	12	143
C3 - Leadership Behaviours that Hinder Salesperson Performance	12	89
C5 - Modern Complex Sales Environment	12	89
C6 - Moderators	8	38
	6	34

Collaboration (5)

As discussed there is some similarity to the existing leadership theories and findings, yet new results have also emerged from the data. There was an imperative about 'Collaboration'. Collaborate was a main theme for both sales leaders and sales representatives. There were sub categories of collaboration identified that were behavioural. These sub categories came out in the first interview from the sales leaders and they were repeated throughout the process. One was to model collaboration and this is done by the sales leader sharing their own networks and by sharing their ideas. Then there was a category of facilitating collaboration and that is done by calling meetings and organizing conference calls so the sales representatives can talk to each other, share wins and losses, and providing contacts, both internally and externally, as the respondents mentioned both. And then there is the category of encouraging collaboration. The sales leader will encourage the representatives to collaborate, not just modelling collaboration. There was an explicit reference to providing suggestions for sales representatives to seek help from and to provide help to their colleagues. Telling stories is a model that was identified. Brainstorming and generating new ideas was highlighted as a theme. The context is stimulating because it is about ideas (Bass & Riggio, 2006), however the process is collaborative. There was a discussion about team building, however the behaviour is one of collaboration and the result is team building.

Linked memos facilitated a systematic review and synthesis of coded content

Figure E-4 Example of Memo Link